"RIDDLES AND AFFAIRS OF DEATH": EQUIVOCATION AND THE TRAGEDY OF MACBETH

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Submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree
Doctor of Philosophy

Faculty of Graduate Studies
The University of Manitoba
Winnipeg, Manitoba

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by

E. Ninian Mellamphy

Supervisor: Dr. Sidney Warhaft

ABSTRACT

Macbeth is a tragedy of self-division. *Macbeth* is a tragedy of equivocation. These statements, as the action of the drama reveals, are so interrelated as to be synonymous. This study illustrates the synonymy in question, analyses the significance of equivocation in its linguistic, psychological, ethical and metaphysical ramifications, and shows it to be a principle of unity in *Macbeth*, which has as a central concern the nature of language--what words mean, how the individual interprets their significance, and how his interpretation reveals the world view, ethical standards, and psychological predispositions that determine his mode of being.

Etymologically, equivocation refers to ambiguity, the potential in any unit of language to incorporate and evoke antithetical meanings. Historically, it denotes the exploitation of ambiguity for purposes of deceit, the suppression of aspects of verbal meaning. Equivocation in both senses is of aesthetic importance in *Macbeth* : the primary action takes place within the consciousness of a protagonist who persistently struggles to suppress the association of words with the ideal

reality of moral absolutism and the ethical values of humanism and to confine their significance to meanings compatible with the world view of moral relativism and the ethics of egoistic rationalism.

Macbeth's willed reduction of language to the univocal, signaled at the climax of the opening movement of the play, parallels, and is the basis for, his release of martial destructiveness from its association with just cause, his adoption of physical reality as his realm of self-realization, and his election of the necessities of anarchic will as a solely significant ethic. The first Act emphasizes the full awareness with which Macbeth rejects his habitual role of creature in a universe whose order is noumenal and chooses to act as creator of a self-centred universe given meaning by fiat of individual will. Thus, it reveals Macbeth to be an equivocator who deceives himself in order to justify his adoption of a new mode of self-fulfilment.

Macbeth cannot reduce to nothing the higher reality and humane ethical standards associated with his suppressed moral nature, just as the equivocator cannot invalidate aspects of truth he suppresses. His is a story of failure. But the fortitude of Macbeth-the-Soldier characterizes Macbeth-the-Equivocator: he is as relentless in the war of verbal meanings as he was on the battlefield. His tragic suffering lies in the futility of his struggle to prevent key words such as "man," "deed," "nothing," "know," and "fear" from resounding with unwanted significations and from echoing the reality and ethical system he dismissed as nothing.

This study demonstrates how the secondary action of the play, action on the level of incident, can best be interpreted in the light of the unifying principle of equivocation. It does so by identifying principles of structure, characterization and linguistic patterning, and by analyzing their overall function. It shows, for example, how Macbeth's mental struggle is reflected in the organization and juxtaposition of scenic units and in the demonstrable psychomachic function of character. It illustrates how Duncan, Banquo and Macduff represent the principle of being which Macbeth eschews and articulate the language attesting thereto; how Macbeth's efforts to destroy them relates to his linguistic and epistemological obsession, and how the haunting voices of the night of regicide, the appearance of Banquo's ghost, and the inevitability of Macduff's role as final antagonist all cohere as proof of the timelessness of that principle. Macbeth is defeated on the level of words ("born" transcends the univocal) before his defeat as a swordsman: this is as necessary as it is appropriate in a tragedy whose hero dissociated "man" from humanitas before releasing martial prowess from the sanctions of loyalty and justice.

Macbeth's tragic potential is universal: the ironic dramatic epilogue clearly establishes that. The grandeur of Macbeth is unique: it lies in the intensity of his commitment to the war of words and worlds and in the fortitude with which he encounters and accepts the nihilistic consequences of his denial of the wholeness of life.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express deepest gratitude to Dr. Sidney Warhaft,
magister optimus, for his honest criticism and
kind encouragement of my work, to my
wife, Cécile, for tolerating
my long affaire with
Lady Macbeth,
and to Daniel, Janelle and Marcel, who already know why
Miranda slept.

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CHAPTER I

"Introduction: Equivocation in *Macbeth*"

Immediately before the sword-fight that culminates in his death, Macbeth, having learnt of the strange birth of Macduff, his adversary, utters these lines:

> Accursed be that tongue that tells me so,
> For it hath cow'd my better part of man;
> And be these juggling fiends no more believ'd,
> That palter with us in a double sense;
> That keep the word of promise to our ear,
> And break it to our hope.[1]

These words are an expression of despair and an acknowledgment of defeat. They represent a climax of awareness towards which the protagonist was already moving when, earlier, having heard his messenger report on the translation of Birnam Wood, he exclaimed:

> I pull in resolution; and begin
> To doubt th' equivocation of the fiend,
> That lies like truth.
>
> (V. v. 42-44)

In both these confessional utterances the defect of his own manliness, or his resoluteness, is the hero's theme. And in both, Macbeth directly relates that defeat to his discovery of the problematic nature of language. The question implicit in both speeches is What, and How, do words signify? In each case we see Macbeth in the process of discovering an answer to that complex question. This discovery involves the perception that what language signifies is anything but absolute, because he learns that the meaning of words depends upon the communicative intentions of the speaker and upon the interpretative predisposition of the hearer. This discovery has to do with the inherently ambiguous nature of language.

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[1] *Macbeth*, V. viii. 17-22, ed. Kenneth Muir, The New Arden Shakespeare, ninth edition (London: Methuen and Co. Ltd., 1962). All citations are from this edition.

What language signifies and how it conveys significance are both part of the same problem. The intention of the speaker determines what he wishes to convey and how he will convey it. The intention may be honest or otherwise. The honest speaker uses words to mirror things as he knows, or thinks, they are. If there is no disparity between opinion (what he thinks) and knowledge (what he knows), then he uses words that have a one-to-one relationship with truth. He can be said, therefore, to strive against the inherent ambiguity and the deceptive potential in language. The dishonest speaker, on the contrary, uses words to deceive. He avails himself of the inherent ambiguity of language for his own ironic purposes. A very special mode of such dishonesty, of such perverse exploitation of the ambiguity of words, is that employed by the equivocator who, as Macbeth knows, "lies like truth."

The response of the hearer to the word can be of various kinds. He may be buoyed up in hope, as Macbeth was by the prophecies of Act IV. He may sink into despondency or despair, as Macbeth does on hearing Macduff's disclosures in Act V. Words, whatever their truth, can prompt different emotional reactions, depending on the hearer's predisposition. When words elicit different emotional reactions at once, such as joy and sorrow or desire and fear, the psychological response can be termed ambivalence. Macbeth's response to the Witches' prophetic greetings in Act I, Scene iii was ambivalent, as his first soliloquy revealed. What that ambivalence ultimately implied is defined, as it were, in his discovery, in Act V, Scene ix, of the significance of ambiguity in words. Before his death, he is released from all ambiguity and ambivalence, and we recognize that to a great extent his tragedy lies ultimately in their interrelatedness.

Macbeth acknowledges, in the two utterances quoted above, that his undoing is related to how the "tongue" directs the "word." He knows how his mind responds to the disconcerting, hence "accursed," truth of Macduff, the honest speaker, the direct truth-teller. He knows too how it responds to the fiendishly beguiling assurances of equivocal palterers, the "double sense" in whose words about Birnam Wood's arrival at Dunsinane and about his own imperviousness to all who are born of women he had earlier failed to recognize. He admits, further, that the exposure of the insufficiency of equivocal assurances through his encounter with unambiguous truths forces him to "pull in resolution" and to admit the discomposure of what he calls "my better part of man." "Resolution" and his preferred concept of manliness are, therefore, ultimately connected with the problems of language and, specifically, with double-sensed or equivocal language.

What Macbeth does not consider overtly in these passages is that the double-sense paltering which undoes him is not only a characteristic of the fiend or fiends referred to, but is characteristic of his own use of words, and that his condemnation, then, extends to himself as a word-juggling fiend. It is the purpose of this study to explore the relation between the problem of equivocation and the problem of manhood, both of which are such important facets of the play's denouement. Such an exploration will involve a close analysis of the incidence and significance of individual ambiguous words and their dramatic effectiveness. It will involve examination of the variety of significant psychological responses to words and events, especially the function of ambivalence in the play. Since, in Macbeth, Shakespeare shows (and this is something linguists were later to discover)[2] how language shapes our thought and, thus, our concepts of reality, and especially how a change in language can transform our appreciation of the cosmos, this study will involve a discussion of how linguistic, psychological and philosophical aspects of the play's texture relate to the moral significance of the concepts of manliness and reality that inform Macbeth's abjuration of the equivocal.

The denouement of Macbeth alerts us to the importance of the theme of equivocation in the play. This theme, I shall demonstrate, is reflected in the equivocal nature of the play's language. Though much has already been written on the subject, there has not been until now any study of one of its most important aspects--the manner in which Macbeth's choice of what he calls "my better part of man" is at once a form of self-affirmation and self-division and how the problem of self-division is reflected in the protagonist's use of ambiguous words. Macbeth is a tragedy of the divided self; Macbeth is a tragedy of equivocation: these statements, as the drama shows, are so interrelated as to be synonymous. It is the purpose of this study to demonstrate that synonymy. This will be done by analysis of the dramatic and philosophic functions of key words in the various movements of the play, words such as "man," "deed," "nothing," "know," and "fear" and their synonyms and antonyms. The study of these key words will involve, necessarily, attention to the play's structural principles and to the methodology and ramifications of the equivocation theme.

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[2] See Stuart Chase, "Foreword," Benjamin Lee Whorf, Language, Thought and Reality (Cambridge, Mass: The Technology Press of Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1956), p. vii.

Since the term "ambiguity" was a familiar subject of discussion among classical and Renaissance rhetoricians,[3] and since the term "equivocation" was in Elizabethan times a "modern" coinage,[4] it is necessary, at the outset of this discussion to define them and differentiate between them.

Ambiguity, which rhetoricians termed ambiguitas or amphibologia, is a rhetorical figure that involves the use of a word in such a way that it can be understood in two or more senses.[5] It involves, therefore, recognition of the inherent relativism of individual units of language. Ambiguity may manifest itself in discourse either as "a mean of emphasis" or as "a vice" (Sonnino, p. 27). In the first case, a word or larger grammatical unit can be understood in two or more senses, but is understood in the sense in which the speaker intends: this is often the case with Shakespearian puns, such as Mercutio's wry quip about his soon becoming a "grave man" (*Romeo and Juliet*, III. i. 96).[6] There are many forms of amphibology frequently exploited by Shakespeare, which have the "emphasis" function above mentioned, and which, because deception is not involved, are not "vices of language." When Fabian and Sir Toby Belch in *Twelfth Night* play with the shifting meanings of the word "dear"--first as "beloved," then as "costly" (III. ii. 47-48)--they provide an example of the figure *antaclasis*. When Rosaline refers, in *As You Like It*, to her dwelling "in the skirts of the forest, like a fringe upon a petticoat" (III. ii. 318-19), her play upon two meanings of "skirt" without repeating the word is a form of ambiguity called *syllepsis*. In the same play, Touchstone's ability to pun with quasi-homonymic words such as "goat" and "Goth" (III. ii. 5-6) is a demonstration of the figure *paronomasia*. And Hamlet's trick of toying with Polonius' use of the word

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[3] See Lee A. Sonnino, A Handbook of Sixteenth Century Rhetoric (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968), p. 27, for a list of discussions of ambiguity by Cicero (De Oratore, II, lxi), Quintilian (Institutio Oratoria, VII, ix), Puttenham (The Art of English Poesie) and Peacham (The Garden of Eloquence).

[4] In The Life of Robert Southwell, Poet and Martyr (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1956), Christopher Devlin attributes the invention of the theory of equivocation to the Augustinian priest Navarro (1493-1587); see Appendix 'C', p. 333.

[5] See Sonnino, p. 260.

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[6] Line references to plays other than *Macbeth* are to *The Complete Pelican Shakespeare*, gen. ed. Alfred Harbage (Baltimore, Md: Penguin Books, 1969).

"Capitol" and tossing it back in his "capital calf" joke (III. ii. 99-101) is also associated with a figure of ambiguity called _asteismus_.[7] These forms of ambiguity are witty and harmless, and Shakespeare uses them with well-remarked (and oft-lamented) frequency. But the word "ambiguity" itself, in its few appearances in the Shakespeare canon, has serious overtones. When Hamlet cautions Horatio and Marcellus against any vague words or signs that might betray their awareness of his "antic disposition," he uses the phrase "such ambiguous giving out" (I. v. 178) in a manner that associates ambiguity with deceit and betrayal. In _Romeo and Juliet_, the Prince, speaking of what caused the tragic deaths of the young lovers, refers to the need "to clear these ambiguities/And know their spring" (V. iii. 217); again the concept of ambiguity is associated with the problem of deceitful appearances and cognitive difficulty.[8] The serious, not to say sinister, connotations of the word in these instances is in accord with Puttenham's view of "amphibologia or the ambiguous" as a form of "viceous speach" and as a "figure of sense incertaine." Puttenham gives a nice example of this figure in the couplet

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[7] The foregoing is based on Sister Miriam Joseph's _Shakespeare's Use of the Arts of Language_ (New York: Columbia University Press, 1947), pp. 164-68.

[8] The only other use of the word in Shakespeare occurs in _Henry V_, V.i. 41, where Fluellen assures Pistol that he must eat part of the leek "certainly, and out of doubt, and out of question too, and ambiguities." Here ambiguity seems to be an antonym of certainty.

> I sat by my lady soundly sleeping,
> My mistresse lay by me bitterly weeping

and then remarks that "no man can tell by this, whether the mistresse or the man, slept or wept."[9]

When Puttenham goes on, in the same paragraph, to associate the ambiguity of the illustrative couplet with the "doubtful speaches" of false prophets, with mystifying Sybilline predictions and puzzling Delphic oracles, all of which he judges to be devised "to abuse superstitious people and to encombre their busie braynes with vaine hope and vaine feare," he is speaking of a phenomenon of deceit akin to what Shakespeare and his contemporaries were to term equivocation.

Equivocation is a subject of some concern in no less than five plays written by Shakespeare between 1601 and 1606: Hamlet, All's Well that Ends Well, Troilus and Cressida,[10]

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[9] George Puttenham, The Arte of English Poesie, ed. G.D. Willcock and A. Walker (Cambridge: The University Press, 1936), p. 260. (I have normalized the long s in the text.)

[10] In Shakespeare and the Archpriest Controversy: A Study of Some New Sources (The Hague: Mouton, 1975), pp. 55-58, David Kaula says that, although there are no explicit references to equivocation in Troilus, there are a number of instances of the rhetorical figure syneciosis (the is and

Othello, and Macbeth, but it is only in Macbeth that the significance of the subject is analyzed thoroughly, that is as a moral as well as a cognitive problem. The concept first appears explicitly in Hamlet, in the hero's wry comment to Horatio on the grave-digger Clown's ingenious punning on "lie" and "women": "How absolute the knave is! We must speak by the card, or equivocation will undo us" (V. i. 128-29). It next appears in All's Well that Ends Well when Parolles' information that Bertram "loved" and "loved not" Helena as a gentleman should prompts the King's remark: "As thou art a knave, and no knave. What an equivocal companion is this!" (V. iii. 249-50). We next find the word in Othello, when the Duke's litany of stoic sententiae fails to console Brabantio, who confesses that "These sentences, to sugar, or to gall,/Being strong on both sides, are equivocal" (I. iii. 216-17). Then we find the concept used by the drunken Porter in Macbeth in his reference to the damnation of one who "could swear in both the scales against either scale, who committed treason enough for God's sake, yet could not equivocate to heaven" (II. iii. 9-12) and in his disquisition on the equivocal relationship between drink and the lechery

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is not figure which ties two contrary truths together) such as Troilus' encounter with the dilemma of "double truth" in "This is, and is not, Cressid" (V. ii. 142). For Kaula, syneciosis bodies forth the dilemma which "represents what appears to be the Shakespearian form of equivocation."

"it provokes and unprovokes" (II. iii. 29). It is only in the hint of the equivocator's damnation by the Macbeth Porter that the concept of equivocation is associated with moral dilemmas. In all the other examples above cited, the word seems to be used in its primary, etymological sense.

In its primary etymological sense, the word equivocation refers to the potential in any unit of language to incorporate and evoke opposite but equally valid systems of meaning.[11] When one of the Witches assures Banquo that he shall be "lesser than Macbeth and greater" (I. iii. 65) the word"greater", for example, has two different significations, one which has a moral, the other a social reference, both of which are appealed to; both are mutually exclusive in the context of the whole sentence, but neither is indicated as the intended meaning. The nature of the equivocation is explained away by the third Witch, who informs Banquo, "Thou shalt get kings, though thou be none" (l. 67).

There is a second sense of equivocation, and this is of great aesthetic import in Macbeth, which relates not so much to the merely connotative potential in units of language as such or to the attendant problem of interpreting the utterly ambiguous, but which relates centrally to the intention that governs the use of language once these possibilities are recognized. It relates to the speaker's awareness of the problems faced by the listener who must choose between equivocal meanings, and to the speaker's decision to deceive, as an outgrowth of that awareness. Thus, it involves the presentation of a univocal facade of meaning that appears to obscure the speaker's recognition of ambiguity and that is geared to obscuring the hearer's awareness of the ambiguous. Equivocation in this sense is clearly the subject of the Porter in his reference to the counterpoised scales of justice and to the equivocator's failure to equivocate to heaven; the relevance of his jokes to the infamous business of the trial of Father Garnet in the spring of 1606 is a commonplace of Macbeth criticism.[12]

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[11] Though the O.E.D. gives as definition #1 "the using (a word) in more than one sense; ambiguity or uncertainty of meaning in words; also (cf. Sp. equivocacion), misapprehension arising from the ambiguity of terms. Obs.", I suggest that the primary, etymological meaning of the word, based on aequus (equal) and vocare (to call), has to do with equal naming--that is, the word's "having different significations equally appropriate or plausible" (O.E.D., "equivocal" def. #2). Brabantio uses the word in this sense in Othello, I. iii. 217, as above noted.

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[12] See Muir, "Introduction," New Arden edition, pp. xvi-xix. A thorough treatment of the subject is provided by F. L. Huntley in his essay, "Macbeth and the Background of Jesuitical Equivocation," PMLA, 79 (1964), 390-400 and in further notes on that same essay by A.E. Malloch and Huntley entitled "Some Notes on Equivocation," PMLA, 81 (1966), 145-46. The most recent treatment of the subject is that by Kaula, Shakespeare and the Archpriest Controversy, pp. 54-57 and 106-12. See also Christopher Devlin's account of a very dramatic discussion of the subject at Southwell's trial, The Life of Robert Southwell, pp. 311-14.

The distinction I have drawn between two types of equivocation has an authoritative Elizabethan basis. Father Garnet himself, in his Treatise of Equivocation, writes that

> some great devines . . . distinguishe two kyndes of equivocation. The one is when we use such wordes as according to the accustomed manner of speech may have two senses, w[hi]ch may happen in two sortes, eyther because one worde of it selfe hath two significations, or because somewhat is understood according to the ordinary custome of common speech. . . . Of some other ways of equivocation practised by the sayntes of God, besides that principally we defended in the chapter before. First, we may use some equivocall word w[hi]ch hath many significations, and we understand it in one sense, w[hi]ch is trewe, although the hearer conceave the other, w[hi]ch is false. The like unto this were if one should be asked whether such a stranger lodgeth in my house, and I should aunswere, "he lyeth not in my house," meaning that he doth not tell a lye there, althoughe he lodge there. Secondly, whan unto one question may be geven many aunsweres, we may yielde one and conceale the other. Thirdly, the whole sentence w[hi]ch we pronounce, or some word thereof, or the maner of poynting or deviding the sentence, may be ambiguous, and we may speake it in one sense trewe for o[u]r owne advantage.[13]

Garnet then goes on to discuss when it may be lawful to use these equivocations, and especially to defend their use under oath before a magistrate when a Catholic finds a direct conflict between the law of the land and the law of God inimical to his welfare. Garnet's defense is similar in kind to that supplied by Fr. Robert Persons in the twelfth chapter of A Briefe Apologie or Defence of the Catholike Ecclesiastical Hierarchie.[14] Persons, appealing to Augustine's Contra Mendacium and to the Summa Theologica of Aquinas, established four categories in which "generally all schoole Doctors do handle the lawfulnes of amphibologie or hiding the truth by prudent dissimulation" (p. 202 recto): first, the need to defend the secrecy of the confessional, second, "in divers cases of examination both of witnesses & others accused before judges," third, when uttering the truth "may concerne the hurt of Gods service or daunger of our neighbours" and, fourth, about the "external confession of our fayth and obligation therein." The point of it all is the defence of "prudent diversion or dissimulation of the truth without lying."

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[13] Henry Garnet, A Treatise of Equivocation [written between 1595-98] ed. David Jardine (London, 1851), p. 29. (I have normalized u and v where they differ from modern usage.) Kaula draws attention to the echo of this lie-lodge

That the theology of amphibologia as defended by Garnet and Persons led to great scandal was inevitable, although they and their Jesuit confreres on the continent insisted that equivocation of the second kind--that is,

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device in Othello, III. iv. 1-9, Archpriest Controversy, pp. 107-108.

[14] This work was published in Antwerp, 1601 and reprinted in London, 1602. STC #19392. The section entitled, in the margin of p. 201 verso, "About equivocations, and doubtful speeches obiected against Iesuits" extends to the end of the chapter, p. 203v.

mental reservation--should have as its end not deception but legitimate self-defence.[15] Christopher Bagshaw, an English secular priest, precisely defines, and roundly condemns, the practice of mental reservation in the following words:

> An other thing also is generally misliked of these our Fathers, and breedeth us indeed very great hatred, besides the danger; and it is their equivocating, which you may tearme in plaine english, lying and cogging. For this among others is one of their rules: that a man framing himselfe a true proposition, when he is asked a question, he may conceale thereof as much as he thinketh good.[16]

For Bagshaw, as for Macbeth in Act V, Scene ix, lying like truth is, unequivocally, lying. But the problem is not at all so simple. Huntley suggests that the Witches' prophecies, especially "All hail, Macbeth! that shalt be king hereafter," can be analyzed as examplary of this kind of equivocation: he says that the statement is a true proposition but that there is also mental reservation involved; the assertion that Macbeth shall be king is a true proposition but the condition that he must be willing to commit murder is suppressed or mentally reserved.[17]

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[15] Devlin notes that later theologians, such as Suarez and Toledo, Jesuits both, defended the mental reservation ploy on these grounds (p. 334).

[16] A Sparing Discoverie of Our English Jesuits (London, 1601; STC #25126), p. 10. Quoted, Kaula, p. 106. (I have normalized u, v and long s to accord with modern usage.) Huntley (pp. 396-97) finds in the Calendar of State Papers (Domestic Series) 1603-1610 (London, 1857) a record of a diatribe by the anti-Catholic Sir Edward Coke which makes points similar to those of the Catholic Bagshaw.

Equivocation is important in Macbeth, not primarily because, as Huntley argues, the hero is a victim of the Witches' amphibological utterances but because he becomes a victim of his own equivocation. Chapter II of this discussion demonstrates that the first movement of the play, which ends with Macbeth's commitment to regicide in Act I, Scene vii, is concerned with the hero's suppressing from his consciousness his keen awareness of the ambiguous nature of language (i.e. its being equivocal in the primary, etymological sense) and his adopting as valid the univocal denotations of words argued for by Lady Macbeth when she defines the meaning of manliness. What is involved in this linguistic ploy is far-reaching.

One might try to define the word "man" in the two senses in which it is used in Act I, Scene vii, in order to illustrate the ramifications of the play in question. To restrict the meaning of the word "man," for example, to "an adult member of the human race who has the intrepidity to do any deed that accords with the promptings of his private desires" is to suppress the possibility that "man" might perhaps be defined otherwise as "an adult member of the human race who has the moral courage always to endeavour to make his conduct conform to the ideals of civilization as they are discoverable in the Natural Law." The suppression of one definition in favour of another has ethical as well as linguistic importance. Such an ethical distinction is important to this discussion of Macbeth. Since the ethic implied in the first definition has obvious affinities with the ethical bias of Renaissance rationalists, and since that implied by the second definition reflects the ethical bias of Renaissance humanists, I have chosen to speak of the language of naturalism and the language of humanism as two languages that come into conflict in the war of words that is, I intend to demonstrate, the primary conflict in Macbeth.

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[17] Huntley, p. 387.

If a clash between opposite significations of individual words implies a clash between different ethical systems reflected in the choice of a word's significance, it may also follow that ethical systems may reflect metaphysical systems which influence one's concept of man's ethical role in life. The question of defining man's role in his world is related to the question of what constitutes the reality to which he must relate. The rationalist might insist that reality can only be defined in terms of sensory perception and conclude that the only reality to which man can relate is palpable, physical, immanent. But the rationalist's voice and view are not the only ones. The idealist might insist that palpable reality is but a poor and limited reflection of the whole of what is, and conclude that reality not only extends beyond the immanent but is essentially transcendent. The latter view is associated with the absoluteness of the real, the former with the relativeness of the real. Hence, it is evident that the problem of equivocation involves not only the awareness of the ambiguity of words and (in the case of Jesuitical equivocation) an assertion or suppression of one aspect of that ambiguity, but includes also an awareness of conflicting ethics and a choice of one and suppression of another, and, further, involves an adherence to one view of reality and the suppression of another. These are the ramifications of equivocation as they are presented dramatically in Macbeth. And it is with reference to these complexities that the words "rationalistic"--or, more frequently, "Machiavellian"--and "humanistic" carry so much weight in this discussion.

The choice of terms such as "humanistic" and "Machiavellian" with reference to contrasting ethics within the play may seem objectionable because of controversies about the definition of "humanism" and because of the difficulties surrounding the word "Machiavellian," which means one thing for the historian of ideas and another to the student of English drama. Hence, it is necessary to define these terms as they will function in my argument.

Our understanding of what the word "humanism"[18] means may depend to a great extent on whether we belong to the school of Kristeller, who has taught us that Renaissance Humanism was essentially a programme of studies based on the classical rhetorical tradition,[19] or to that of Cassirer, who claims that the humanistic tradition is a development of Platonic, Ciceronian and Augustinian philosophy and that its main tendency was towards the union of the rhetorical and the philosophic to promote the ideal of what Petrarch called docta pietas.[20] For the purposes of my discussion of Macbeth, I use the word in a manner more closely associated with Cassirer's theory than with Kristeller's. I use it to suggest an attitude towards life that is ethically oriented and that is complemented by the practice of active virtue, an attitude that has its base in an Erasmian "faith in man's rational self-direction and essential goodness."[21] This interpretation is supported in a recently published work by the following statement: "It is conventional to identify humanism with a cultivating of the classics. Partly, the identification is sponsored by those who seek to discriminate between the scientific and literary man. Historically, however, there is on this head no particular reason for dissociating literature and science, or for identifying humanism with love of books. The fathers of humanism, like Cheke and Vives and Erasmus, are students of the classics as also of patristic writings and the Scriptures. That is, however, not primarily because they love literature but because they are devoted to whatever makes most for the uses of life. The devotion to use, rather than to beauty as an end in itself, is what humanism means."[22]

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[18] Augustino Campana, in "The Origin of the Word 'Humanist'," Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes, 9 (1946), 60-73 and Paul Oscar Kristeller, in "Humanism and Scholasticism in the Italian Renaissance," Byzantion, 17 (1944-45), 346-64, associate the original meaning of the word with the programme of learning centred on the study of the classics. Marcel Francon, "Humanisme," Renaissance Quarterly, 21 (1968), 300-303, shows that in French the word was associated with "la culture des belles lettres."

[19] See Renaissance Thought: The Classic, Scholastic, and Humanistic Strains (New York: Harper and Row, 1965).

[20] See Ernst Cassirer, The Individual and the Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy, trans. Mario Domandi (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1963).

My use of the term "Machiavellian" not only raises the question of Shakespeare's familiarity with _The Prince_ and The Discourses[23] and/or Gentillet's Contre-Machiavel[24] but also the spectre of such Machiavels of the English stage as Marlowe's Barabbas, Kyd's Lorenzo, Shakespeare's Richard III, Iago and Edmund, and many others who, like Lady Macbeth, can be shown to evolve out of misconstruction, misconception, or popular misrepresentation of the Florentine author's ideas.[25] Machiavelli's doctrine is political, and the ultimate justification of the methods and values he describes is the greater good of the state as a whole.[26] The polar opposite of this common good, as is evident in Discourses, III. i., is discovered in the excessive individualism of the leader who places his own personal ambition before all other goods, and seeks power for its own sake;[27] the "Machiavels" of Elizabethan drama, however, characteristically place personal ambition before all other good, seeking power for its own sake;[28] therefore, they represent a corruption, so to speak, of Machiavelli's system.[29] What he advocates as political ethics, they adopt as a personal code of behaviour that has no reference to any end beyond self-gratification. Hence one can make a distinction between "Machiavellianism," which refers to the subject of the science of politics, and "Machiavelism," which denotes matters of English theatrical conventions of characterization. However, the only available adjective to refer to each of these nouns is "Machiavellian," and this may lead to some impreciseness at times. Nevertheless, even though the term may occasionally seem unclear or ambiguous, I have chosen to use it, since in this very impreciseness I have the support of Elizabethan usage and because it is a meaningful label for a kind of thinking based on a deep-rooted pessimism about human nature[31] which (a) perceives as normal the fact of immoral practice in the pursuit of power, (b) sees as necessary to the enjoyment of power the coupling of lion-strength and fox-guile, (c) dismisses metaphysics, religious doctrine and orthodox ethics (what should be done) and (d) establishes expediency as a new and significant ethic. However different the goal of the stage Machiavel from the political ends suggested for the true Machiavellian in the _Discourses_ or _The Prince_, the methods and mores of the stage figure reflect with some accuracy certain methods and mores advocated in those works; hence, the use of the term "Machiavellian" would seem justified for the purposes of this argument.

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[21] Douglas Bush, _The Renaissance and English Humanism_ (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1939), p. 66.

[22] Russell Fraser, _The Dark Ages and the Age of Gold_ (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1973), pp. 139-40.

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[23] On the late sixteenth century English translations of these works, see Napoleone Orsini, "Machiavelli's Discourses, a MS. translation of 1599," The Times Literary Supplement, October 10, 1936, p. 820, and "Elizabethan MS. Translations of Machiavelli's Prince," The Journal of the Warburg Institute, 1 (1937) 166-69.

[24] Innocent Gentillet, Discours sur les moyens de bien gouverner . . . Contre Nicholas Machiavel Florentin [1576] (republished as Anti-Machiavel), ed. C. Edward Rathe (Geneve: Librairie Droz, 1968).

[25] For a concise discussion of the Machiavel figure on the Elizabethan and Jacobean stage, see Anthony Parel, "Introduction: Machiavelli's Method and His Interpreters," The Political Calculus, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), pp. 20-24.

[26] According to Alkis Kontos, "The goal of political leadership [for Machiavelli] is to establish an environment whereby the basic and immutable tenets of human nature are fully accommodated and utilized, and to maintain and stabilize such accommodation as long as possible through the creation of socio-political systems." "Success and Knowledge in Machiavelli," The Political Calculus, p. 84.

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[27] See Discourses, III. i., where the insolence and and ambition of men are seen as a threat to the republican ideal, and I. iii., for a discussion of the dangers of ambition. (All references to The Prince and The Discourses are to the Modern Library combined edition [New York: Random House, 1950]).

[28] John Bakeless, in Christopher Marlowe: The Man and His Times (New York: William Morrow and Co., 1937), p. 183, makes this point about Marlowe's heroes specifically.

[29] Una Ellis-Fermor, The Jacobean Drama: An Interpretation (1936), 4th revised edition (London: Methuen and Co. Ltd., 1958), p. 254 claims, without corroborative evidence, that Shakespeare explored and quickly rejected the Machiavel figure as socially and politically invalid, and "carried forward from his exploration certain fundamental conclusions about the nature of individualism and that perversion of individualism which is villainy." Despite reservations about a personal critical axiom of this kind, I agree with the hypothesis of a Machiavellian frame-work of thought informing Shakespeare's characterization of the villain.

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[30] See Napoleone Orsini, "'Policy' or The Language of Elizabethan Machiavellianism," _Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes_, 9 (1946), 122-34, for a discussion of the technical terms (i.e. policy, practice, aphorism, maxim and Machiavel) used by Elizabethan writers who discussed or adopted Machiavellian ideas.

[31] Maritain states that this is the basis of

The conflict between humanistic and Machiavellian ethics reaches a climax at the end of the last scene of Act I. There Macbeth shifts his moral stance. He rejects the ethical position reflected in "I dare do all that may become a man;/Who dares do more, is none" and attaches himself to that signaled in the speech beginning "Bring forth men-children only," wherein he indicates his choice of Lady Macbeth's concept of "courageous" manliness. In the light of a careful analysis of the first movement of the play, one discovers Macbeth's shift in stance here has metaphysical implications of great import.

The metaphysical dimensions of ethical choice, dramatized in Macbeth's adherence to Machiavellian *virtù* rather than a humanistic concept of the virtuous, are carefully introduced in the early scenes of the play. Analysis of the concepts appealed to by Duncan and his followers and those appealed to by Lady Macbeth leads to the discovery that the opening movement of *Macbeth* deals centrally with the antithesis between two *Weltanschauungen*, that is, between contrary visions of reality. One can discover even in the very structure of the first movement of the play--in the dramatic composition of individual scenes and in the signifi-

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Machiavelli's thought. See "The End of Machiavellianism," in *The Social and Political Philosophy of Jacques Maritain*, ed. Joseph W. Evans and Leo R. Ward (London: Geoffrey Blis, 1956), p. 321.

cant juxtaposition of scenes--a careful working out of this antithesis. The reality of the absolutist, which is ultimately that of the ideal, and the reality of the relativist, which is categorically that of the physically real, respectively parallel the ethic of the humanist, with its identical appeal to transcendent notions of good and evil, and the ethic of the Machiavel, with its rationalistic insistence on a definition of good and evil in terms of what is merely expedient. The significance of associating a character such as Duncan with a particular world view, with its attendant morality and sense of linguistic definition, and of making Lady Macbeth the determined defender of all that is metaphysically, ethically and linguistically antithetical thereto, is discoverable in the relationship between the contraries they represent and the contrary forces battling within the mind of the hero, whose soliloquies dramatize his struggle to resolve those contraries. The outer action reflects the inner, and primary, action within the protagonist's mind and, thus, has an important psychomachic function.

The psychomachic function of characterization is discoverable not only thematically, but also in terms of the play's structure and through an analysis of the possible significance of Shakespeare's departures from his main source, Holinshed. The contrast between the weak Duncan of the source and the blameless, virtuous monarch of the play alerts us to Shakespeare's emphasis upon a lack of adequate motive for the murder as a means of highlighting the hero's guilt. But when one recognizes that Duncan in the play is an embodiment of qualities, attitudes and ethics that Macbeth must reject before finding it possible to commit regicide, it is evident that Duncan functions as a representative of the very principles from which Macbeth tries to escape, and that Duncan's death is a sign of Macbeth's endeavour to destroy those principles. The contrast between the accomplice Banquho in the source and the tempted but evil-resistant Banquo of the play can be understood when, in the light of the dramatic development, we discover that Macbeth's motivation for killing him has much to do with the recognition that Banquo is a mirror of the goodness and royalty of nature characteristic of Duncan both as person and as principle. It is only when the attempt utterly to destroy what Banquo represents has failed that Macbeth concentrates his attention on killing Macduff. The latter in his reaction to the horror of regicide, voices words which echo the values and insights associated with Duncan and, thereby, becomes an image of the principle represented by the murdered king. Hence, he is, inevitably, the next elected victim of Macbeth's destructiveness. It is in the inevitability of the choice of Macduff as victim that Shakespeare's departures from Holinshed in the characterization of Duncan and Banquo can best be understood as essential to the play's necessities, for the physical elimination of each of the three has precisely the same metaphysical implication. The relationship of the elimination of inconvenient or undesired metaphysical principle to the equivocator's ploy of "mental reservation" or "suppression" is significant, and it is in terms of this relationship that the structural principles of the play, the rationale of characterization, and the problems of vision, conscience, and language can best be seen in their organic interrelationship.

Shakespeare's contemporaries, whether they condemned the ruse of equivocation as "lying and cogging" or condoned it as a legitimate form of "speaking in one true sense" for one's own advantage, knew and acknowledged that amphibological tricks did not diminish the wholeness of truth, even though hearers might be deceived into ignoring or denying important aspects of that wholeness. Shakespeare seems to have been intrigued by the tragic potential in the cognitive error of the misled hearer, whether he is victim of the lie equivocal or the lie direct. He had dealt with the deceived hearer problem already in Othello, where the hero becomes entangled in the web of curiously wrought lies, and also in Hamlet, where the hero, approaching the problem of language and appearances from a position opposite to that of Othello, struggles to discover where truth is hid. In Lear too the problem of deceit is central; there the hero cannot perceive Cordelia's truth and fails to perceive her sisters' lies. In all cases, the problem of language is central to the tragic dilemma, but none of them is so markedly close to Macbeth as "a tragedy of words" as is Othello, a play in which the hero's assertion "It is not words that shakes me thus" (IV. i. 41) ironically reinforces our perception of the true nature of his victimhood. In all of these tragedies and, again, quite pronouncedly in Othello, the relationship between what words mean and how they are interpreted is dealt with with reference to ethical and metaphysical systems associated with the chosen meanings of the word.

The principal conflict in Othello is a clash between two contrasting visions of reality, the one associated with Iago, the other associated, initially, and ultimately too, with Othello himself. It is a conflict between the truth of the idealist's reality and the antithetical truth of the realist's.

Othello, as his apologia pro vita et amore ejus before the signoria reveals (I. iii. 128-70), has entered the complex society of Venice, having spent his life as warrior hero in realms that belong, recognizably, to the simplistic, idealized world of romance. True to his romantic history, secure in the all-in-all sufficiency which enabled him to overcome adversity in the recent and distant past, he encounters the problem of evil in realms unheroic, sophisticated, courtly and degenerate. Unaware that the virtue which proved constant and indomitable when he opposed markedly close to Macbeth as "a tragedy of words" as is Othello, a play in which the hero's assertion "It is not words that shakes me thus" (IV. i. 41) ironically reinforces our perception of the true nature of his victimhood. In all of these tragedies and, again, quite pronouncedly in Othello, the relationship between what words mean and how they are interpreted is dealt with with reference to ethical and metaphysical systems associated with the chosen meanings of the word.

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Cannibals, Anthropophagi and the like may prove defective and insecure in a world of chamberers and equivocators, he is ill-prepared for the encounter with the monstrous form of evil that threatens him. The Anthropophagi were indeed as they seemed. The new enemy declares itself in terms of disjointure between seeming and being: "I am not what I am" (I. i. 65). Othello's fatal unawareness of the nature of deceit is increased by his encounter with love in its most admirable form, Desdemona. In the unison of her apparent and real affection he finds proof of the fusion of the real and ideal, proof, therefore, that the real is the ideal. Theirs is, as they see it, a marriage of true minds, their love founded on Desdemona's perception of Othello's essential self as he knows it and declares it in words. She has discovered the identity of his truth and his words, has seen his visage in his mind, has dedicated her "soul and fortunes" to the "very quality" of her lord--to his "honours" and his valiant parts (I. iii. 148-51). She dares to trumpet forth in words the truth of this spiritual love. He dares, too, to request that she be allowed to join him on Cyprus so that he can be "free and bounteous of her mind" (l. 265). The primacy of the spiritual reality of love is their theme. Desdemona is Othello's "soul's joy" (II. i. 182) and their union partakes so much of perfection, of the absolute (l. 189), that it is ineffable. And Cassio's courtly celebration of the virtue of the "divine Desdemona" who seems nature's piece against fancy, excelling the "quirks of blazoning pens"

(1. 64) suggests further that Othello has discovered and wedded excellence itself. Desdemona then is a symbol of Othello's true self, a symbol of his confidence in his own virtue, an embodiment of love and of love's order, in sum, a symbol of his vision of things. Should that symbol prove false, it is because his vision is false, as he attests when he declares that the cessation of his love for her would be a reduction of his universe to chaos. When the vision seems false, he is indeed undone: no more a soldier, no more his heroic self. Yet, he attempts to reconstruct his vision and his ordered universe by destroying the symbol which he found inadequate. This is unquestionably an act of madness, inconsistent with his view of her as valid symbol of his truth. And he learns, too late, of his madness, when he learns, after all, that she, the symbol of his truth, was true and his ideal vision no illusion.

What intervened between Othello's initial and final certainties about the truth of the ideal was Iago, the relativistic antagonist of all absolutes, the rationalistic upholder of expediency against idealistic ethics. Though, as his soliloquies demonstrate, he is incapable of grasping the nature of his own motivation, Iago is driven by a conviction that man inhabits an incoherent universe which can only be given shape by the individual will allied to reason as the perceiver of reality in the physical phenomena of the world. Whatever confutes his vision of life's truth he attacks in order to make it conform to his reality. Thus his role is that of the mad artist striving to make of life an artifact that bodies forth his vision,and his artistry is that of words. He considers the ideal of service and all selflessness folly, flouts the superiority of the military theorist over the experienced, pragmatic soldier, and is convinced that love is nothing if not "a sect or scion" of lust (I. iii. 330). Determined to defend his perverse truth, he must perforce pervert his role in the military hierarchy, serving only his own interests, undermine the validity of the theorist's effectiveness in war, confound the ass-idealist whose world is one of absolutes, and prove the embodiment of ideal love a whore. His mode of action is to counter their seeming excellence with his contrary seeming, to destroy what he cannot accept as truth, and ,finally, when his seemings is proved false and the contrary seeming proved indeed to bear a direct relationship with truth, chaos does not come again, for it has always been with him: he refuses to gainsay his vision of things, refuses to approve the contrary vision, chooses to remain silent and perversely true to his own lying vision of things.

In Othello Shakespeare provides us with a hero who is an idealist, who habitually assumes that words bear a direct relationship to truth and appearances a direct relationship with reality. This idealist has encountered in Desdemona proof in the world of immanence of the transcendent reality of love. In this encounter he has corroboration of the validity of the truth of his traditional vision of life: what is does not contradict, nor does it seem to contradict, what should be. But the world in which he encounters the divine Desdemona is a world that also allows for the demonic Iago, and Othello's experience has not prepared him for the recognition of such a duality. He assumes that his wife is "honest"--that is, a chaste lady--and that his ancient is "honest"--that is, a man of veracity. When the words of the honest man lead him to question the virtue of the honest woman, two honesties seem to be incompatible. He is incapable of investigating the discrepancy: he must doubt the reliability of his faith in the relationship between word and truth, and the necessity, of entering the realm of doubt destroys his faith. He anchors his attention to the reliability of the honest man, questions the honesty of the woman and is prey to ocular proofs that seem to destroy his vision of love's perfection. Incapable of recognizing his analysis of idealism as that of the rationalist, unaware of a logic of rationalism, he uses an erroneous methodology to arrive at erroneous conclusions. This is a tragedy of unawareness.

In Macbeth, Shakespeare deals again with the problematic nature of truth and reality but now the testing-grounds of truth are not those of the cynic-as-liar but those of the equivocator-as-liar. He now internalizes the Othello drama, providing us with a hero who plays Iago to his own Moor, and presenting us with a powerful tragedy of awareness. To speak of Macbeth as Iago and Macbeth as Othello is to over-simplify, but to do so in order to recognize that the play deals with a struggle between two Macbeths, the one anarchic, pragmatic, ambitious and equivocating, the other attracted to, and attached to, an ordered, idealistic vision of man and his universe and to the virtues and verbal meanings which reflect that vision. The self-fulfilment sought by Macbeth in the murder of Duncan involves self-deceit; the play deals with the nature of the struggle between those opposed selves which exist within the self.[32]

Though the concept of contrary selves as I will use it in this discussion was not clearly formulated by

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[32] For a discussion of the concept of "unsounded selves" or "components of character that may be revealed under the stress of action," see Michael Goldman, Shakespeare and the Energies of Drama (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1972), pp. 12-32. Goldman sees the "unsounded self" motif as a great one in the early works of Shakespeare, and says that the same motif is also important in the middle tragedies, with their "self-battled heroes" (p. 25). His assertion that "Shakespeare presides over the change of the word 'self' from purely grammatical indicator to something like the complex term it is today" (p. 25) is supported by a discussion of Shakespeare's substantive and pronominal uses of the word "self" (pp. 153-58).

Renaissance psychologists or philosophers, it is implicit in the contradictory connotations of the word "self" in the literature of the sixteenth century. When we find Polonius admonishing his son to be true to himself, we should recognize that the aphorism so tritely mouthed by him is an echo of a serious recurrent motif in the Christian-humanist literature of self-knowledge, especially in such influential works as Erasmus' Enchiridion Militis Christiani. In Christian-humanist thought "self" and "soul" are one, and being true to oneself means practising the cardinal virtues, living according to right reason with the help of divine grace, and combining something of the Stoic's philosophical detachment from the world with the Christian's need to co-operate with grace to insure his soul's salvation.[33] Even in works not explicitly Christian in orientation the association of selfhood and morality is commonplace. Sir Philip Sidney, for example, reflects directly the central humanist view of the value of self-knowledge, and the concept of self as "soul" or "mind," when he defends the "Poets noblenes" and superiority over his "Competitors," the "Historians" and "Morral Philosophers," in these lines: "[All the] Sciences . . . as they have each a private end in themselves, so yet are they all directed to the highest end of the mistres Knowledge, by the Greekes called _Arkitektonike_, which stands, (as I think) in the knowledge of a mans selfe, in the Ethicke and politick consideration, with the end of well dooing and not of well knowing onely; . . .so that, the end of all earthly learning being verteous action, those skilles that most serve to bring forth that have a most iust title to be Princes over all the rest."[34] The connotations of "self" here are positive and optimistic, as they would be on Polonius' lips were he truly the sage and serious sire he likes to play. We can better understand the connotations of "self" in the tradition evoked by Polonius when we recognize that Hamlet is concerned with the same idea when he reflectively examines the role of "conscience" in human affairs.

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[33] Sir John Davies' Nosce Teipsum reflects this tradition closely, although his emphasis is upon the need for grace, not the idea of cooperation with grace (which would be incompatible with Protestant doctrine).

But "self" frequently has other, and very negative, connotations in Shakespeare's works. In _Twelfth Night_ Viola accuses Malvolio of being "sick of self-love" (I. v. 85). She speaks of an illness which Shakespeare makes the subject of Sonnet LXII, where he calls it "sin" (l. 3) and "iniquity" (l. 12). It is this sin that Brutus imputes to Coriolanus when he speaks of him as "insolent,/O'ercome with pride, ambitious past of all thinking;/Self loving--" (V. v. 59). Similar negative connotations attend King Henry V's reference to the unworthy self when, in banishing Falstaff, he speaks of having "turned away [his] former self" (V.v. 59). The "self" here referred to negatively, that is from the standpoint of the moralist, could of course be approved quite positively if viewed from the position of the realist. Machiavelli had provided his readers with an alternative to the humanistic nosce teipsum ideal; he presented them with the same dictum, but inverted or, as some would say, perverted its meaning, inviting the realist to recognize that life is warfare in other than Erasmian terms and that success therein depends on psychological expertise in mastering others rather than on any pious and impractical ideals of self-control: naturalistic egoism is the alternative to the idealistic selflessness advocated by the humanists. Marlowe's Tamberlaine knew what choice to make; so did Shakespeare's Edmund and Iago.

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[34] _An Apology for Poetry_, in _Elizabethan Critical Essays_, Vol. I, ed. G. Gregory Smith (London: Oxford University Press, 1904), p. 161.

In Shakespearian drama the Machiavellian concept of self-fulfilment is never presented as an object worthy of the audience's approval; attachment to it is the prerogative of the villain. In the drama of self-division, "conscience" or the worthy self is associated with virtue, "expediency" or the unworthy self with vice.

Within these antithetical concepts of the self lies the potential or possibility of exploiting dramatically the struggle of contrary selves within the Self. The promise of this dramatic possibility is provided in Sonnets I and IV. The line "Thyself thy foe, to thy sweet self too cruel" (l. 8) defines the duality I speak of, and balances the short-term pleasures of the less admirable self with the long-term needs of the better, truer self. Sonnet IV addresses the same problem, drawing upon the parable of the talents to condemn profligacy as unnatural and weighing the evil of self-deception with the good of truth to the worthy self: "Thou of thyself thy sweet self dost deceive" (l. 10). The most obvious dramatic treatment of this problem is achieved in *Antony and Cleopatra*, where the protagonist, in the infinite variety of his inconstancy, in torn on the rack of self-division: he is and is not Antony; he speaks of the desire to subdue his "worthiest self" (IV. xii. 47), and he is destroyed in the warfare of self against self. In *Othello* in the clash between the idea of Desdemona as the hero's "soul" and of her being, as he says, "false to me," we discover the drama of contrary selves: egoism and selflessness clash tragically. The same idea appears more obliquely in *Troilus and Cressida* and in *Richard III*. The association of the better self with nature, morality, and conscience informs Richard's facetious praise of his hypocrite-henchman Buckingham, whose Machiavellian *virtù* he lauds by parodying the humanistic concept: he calls Buckingham "my better self, my counsel's consistory,/My oracle, my prophet" and promises "I, as a child, will go by thy direction" (II. ii. 151-53). In Troilus and Cressida the heroine, bidding farewell to her Trojan, reveals her knowledge of her iniquitous future in these words:

> I have a kind of self resides with you;
> But an unkind self, that itself will leave
> To be another's soul.
> (III. ii. 140-42)

Beneath the puns one discovers the distinction between the "kind self" and an antithetical "unkind self" and a wistful confession of self-betrayal: the Elizabethan association of Kindness with Naturalness and Order enables us to discover Cressida's association of each of these contraries with virtue and vice respectively.

In Macbeth the conflict of contrary selves is introduced in the protagonist's first soliloquy, immediately after the encounter with the Witches, and is signaled in Macbeth's remark on self-division in a phrase that refers to the shaking of his "single state of man" (I. iii. 140). The conflict that begins in this scene involves the collision of ambition and the Machiavellism necessary for its satisfaction with conscience and the humanistic values necessary for its satisfaction. Since the "kind self" is associated with the ethical system approved in the play and the "unkind self" is associated with "expediency" and with "manliness" (a Machiavellian term antithetical to humanitas) which are treated negatively in the play, I have chosen to refer to Macbeth's two selves as "the ethical self" and "the expedient self" respectively.

In the soliloquy in which the concept of antithetical selves is introduced, the ethical self is associated, as it is consistently thereafter, with words such as "imaginings" and "fantastical" (I. iii. 138-39). The function of the imagination and/or fantasy in the play has been the subject of some controversy in the history of twentieth-century criticism of Macbeth, with Bradley claiming that Macbeth's imagination is the best part of him and most scholars since then asserting that the hero is a victim of diabolically disordered fantasy. To search for illumination in sixteenth century writings on the subject is to enter a mare's nest of contradictory theories. In general moralists and psychologists assert that imagination or fantasy--often the words are interchangeable, as they were in medieval psychology--is a dangerous faculty, and that those subject to its influence are, as Theseus would have it, prey to illusions: "The lunatic, the lover and the poet/Are of imagination all compact" because their "seething brains" and "shaping fantasies" enable them to "apprehend/ More than cool reason ever comprehends" (A Midsummer

Night's Dream, V. i. 4-8). Lady Macbeth would seem to be devoted to defending staunchly Theseus' thesis. But the defenders of poesy in the sixteenth century are champions of the faculty denigrated by moralists and psychologists. They defend this faculty--some call it "imagination" and some "phantasy"--because by virtue of it the poet is capable of bodying forth images of the ideal, thus reflecting transcendent truth.

Because of an etymological confusion dating back to the time of Plato, if not further, when the word phantasía was a very comprehensive term, referring to both the higher, figurative function of a mental faculty and the lower, delusive function, the word "phantasy" in English is an ambiguous word. The Romans translated phantasía as imaginatio, and the translation inherited the comprehensiveness of the original: as a result both words have a centrifugal quality, leaning, on the one side, towards what Sidney and his fellows defend as a valuable gift which characterizes the poet as seer and, leaning on the other side, towards a cautious view of the dangerous faculty which is the misfortunate endowment of the lunatic. Thus, Coleridge's theory of "imagination" and "fancy" has deep roots in the classical tradition. Coleridge's distinction is based upon a medieval tendency to distinguish between the Greek words phantasía and phantasma: ~~they~~ medieval scholars followed the Latin tradition in translating phantasía as imaginatio; for phantasma they chose to use the Latin word *phantasia*.[35] The English word "phantasy" could refer, according to the writer's intentions, to the Greek *phantasía* (and the Latin *imaginatio*) or to the Medieval Latin *phantasia* (and the Greek *phantasma*): his intention and the traditional etymological bias it reflects are responsible for the word's positive or negative denotations. Had the Romans decided to avoid the sheer comprehensiveness of *phantasía* and chosen to reserve the word *imaginatio* for what the Greeks called *eikasía* (Coleridge's "imagination") and use *phantasia* to convey the phantasmal, delusory connotations of the Greek word *phantasía*, they would have done a great service to later cultures and prevented a great deal of anglophone confusion: at least we could recognize that there could be precise distinctions between Theseus' "imagination" and "shaping fantasies," even if he may be indifferent to these distinctions.

In Shakespeare's day Coleridge's distinctions were implicit in defences of poesie and even some psychologists allowed for a distinction between good and bad imaginations. Modern critics have been as divided on the role of imagination in *Macbeth* as Elizabethan theorists on the whole were divided on the merits of the imaginative faculty. Bradley stated that Macbeth's imagination was the best part of him. Few critics since then have grasped the soundness of Bradley's insight. The prevailing judgment of twentieth century criticism on the subject is that Macbeth is a victim of diabolically disordered fancy. This has led to serious misreadings of the play, and part of my purpose in this discussion is to defend the Bradleian view, to do so by referring to polarities of opinion in Elizabethan discussions of the imagination by psychologists and defenders of poetry,[36] and to show that it is in the writings of the latter that we can most meaningfully learn how to understand the role of imagination in Macbeth. To clarify the distinctions discoverable beneath the etymological confusion enveloping "fantasy" and "imagination" in Elizabethan treatises, I have chosen to refer, as Sidney does, to the "icastic" and "fantastic" functions of the imagination: the Greek adjectives eἰkastike (imaginative) and phantastiké (imaginary) are the basis for this choice. The "icastic" function relates to all that Coleridge means by "imagination," the "fantastic" function to all that he suggests by the word "fancy." It is my purpose to illustrate that it is in terms of an icastic view of the role of Macbeth's imagination that we can best comprehend the relationship of that role to the drama of contrary selves, antithetical visions of reality, confliction ethical systems and contrasting languages--in short, to the complex ramifications of equivocation that inform the tragedy.

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[35] See Murray Wright Bundy, *The Theory of the Imagination in Classical and Medieval Thought*, Illinois University Studies in Language and Literature, XII, 2-3 (Urbana, Ill.: The University, 1927), p. 278. My debts to Bundy are extensive in these pages.

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[36] See William Rossky, "Imagination in the English Renaissance: Psychology and Poetic," Studies in the Renaissance, 5 (1958), 49-73, for a study of their divergent theories.

CHAPTER II

"All that May Become a Man"

Soldier, Sword and Word

The brief opening scene of Macbeth strikes the keynote of the play as a whole. In atmosphere, characterization, action and dialogue, it makes a terse but overwhelming impression of ambiguity, inversion and perversion, and it economically introduces the recurrent themes and dominant problems of this most unified of Shakespeare's tragedies.

In the unsettling turbulence of thunder, lightning and rain, the threatening obscurity of fog and filthy air, the chill of falling darkness, and gloomy mists of the bleak unfruitful heath, the scene establishes the predilection of the Witches for what is frightful and their identification with what is evil. As characters the Witches are as bewildering to the audience as they will be to Banquo in his first encounter with them: their disconcerting appearance defies all certainty as to their reality,

> Live you? or are you aught
> That man may question?
> (I. iii. 42-43)

their humanity,

> What are these,
> So wither'd and so wild in their attire,
> That look not like th' inhabitants o' th' earth,
> And yet are on't?
>
> (ll. 39-42)

and even their sex,

> You should be women,
> And yet your beards forbid me to interpret
> That you are so.
>
> (ll. 45-47)

Their actions, especially their prompt obedience to cat and toad, not only suggest a perversion of the order of the chain of being, but also raise questions about the place in the hierarchy of creatures of Paddock, Graymalkin and the third unnamed familiar, in that the authority vested in them seems so absolute. In such terms the play introduces such large questions as: What is real?, What is human?, What is femininity?--questions which, as the action of the play will show, are of great consequence in the tragedy of Macbeth. His encounter with the Witches is an encounter with the temptation to do a deed which will involve him in the necessity of defining the nature of human reality, deciding what is the activity appropriate to humanity, and interpreting the question What is Manliness? in a manner that demands reflection on the nature of femininity and masculinity. His response to these questions will reflect the ambivalence of his response to the idea of regicide which he discovers in the Witches' greetings. How he answers these questions--that is, how he decides to act--demonstrates dramatically a tragic human effort to resolve the problems of ambiguity and ambivalence once one has stepped into the uncertain realm of tantalizing evil.

The language of Act I, Scene i resounds with tumultuous ambiguity. In the line "When the battle's lost and won" (l. 4) there is a suggestion of "a unity of opposites in the nature of things, an ambivalence where the same thing may be both 'fair and foul'."[1] Furthermore, the haunting motto "Fair is foul, and foul is fair" (l. 11) goes beyond the sheer suggestion of the ambiguous; in its rounded, balanced completeness there is a delineation of a final choice between conflicting opposites. This choice not only involves "the main theme of the reversal of values . . . [with which] are associated premonitions of the conflict, disorder and moral darkness into which Macbeth will plunge himself"[2] but also demonstrates, in the willed reduction of complexity to the single terms of the Witches' chosen values, the mode of Macbeth's later response to the duality of things. What is involved here is not only inversion but also confusion. In this sense the play itself, like the crime that determines its tragic character, is confusion's masterpiece.

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[1] R.A. Foakes, "Contrasts and Connections," Shakespeare Jahrbuch, 90 (1954), p. 79.

[2] L.C. Knights, Some Shakespearian Themes (London: Chatto and Windus, 1959), p. 104.

The atmosphere, characterization, action and language of the first scene, then, present with precise dramatic impact the problem of equivocation and, so, introduce one of the most important themes of the play. In contrast between the Witches' "foul _is_ fair" (I. i. 10) and the "foul _and_ fair" of Macbeth's first line a few scenes later (I. iii. 38), two distinct aspects--or forms--of equivocation are established. The contrast between "foul is fair" and "foul and fair" is of the deepest significance, because equivocation works in two discrete senses in _Macbeth_.

In the primary, etymological sense, the word "equivocation" means "ambiguity"; it refers to "equal meaning" and, thereby, to the potential in a single word or in a larger unity of language to evoke and incorporate opposite but equally valid systems of meaning.[3] An instance of this is Macbeth's "So foul and fair a day I have not seen" (I. iii. 38). Here the equivocal nature of "day" is forthrightly underlined. The word "foul" in its primary denotation may refer to one or all of the following: the thunder, lightning and rain, the nature of domestic rebellion and foreign invasion, and possibly even the slaughter attendant upon their suppression. "Fair," on the other hand, would seem primarily defined by the antecedent praise of Macbeth and Banquo as victors, that is, by the success celebrated in Act I, Scene ii. But the nature of equivocation embraces these words also: as Jorgensen suggests, (though he does, perhaps, over-state the case) the ambiguities of the first scene insure that thereafter "every fair must be read in a darker sense as foul."[4] The "fair" of Macbeth's success is undercut by the appearance of the Witches. Their dark purpose ("to meet with Macbeth" [I. i. 7]) has something in it of the "mulier est hominis confusio" tragic theme of Chaucer's *Nun's Priest's Tale*, which anticipates Lady Macbeth's role later. Their bearded femininity, an outward sign of the distortion of nature, can be recognized in retrospect as foreshadowing Lady Macbeth's function, for her prayer to become unsexed expresses the wish to mitigate her feminine instincts, and implies the will to be characterized by the compromised womanliness of the Witches. "Foul" also, especially in its meteorological sense, recalls the Witches' penchant for storm and gloom that are the "fair" of their choice. Thus, either "fair" or "foul" can, at once, echo the strange predispositions and perverted values of the Witches and outline the norms of Macbeth's habitual judgment and values. Neither is excluded, neither invalidated; both are preserved in an equilibrium of double evaluation that attests to the complex nature of human experience. The equivocal nature of language reflects the essential duality of things, and this mirroring of the principle of complementarity which Rabkin sees as the characteristic mode of dramatic vision in Shakespeare[5] can be seen in the dramatic function of individual words.

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[3] See _O.E.D._ "Equivocal," definition 2, which refers to a word's "_having_ different significations equally appropriate or plausible."

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[4] Paul A. Jorgensen, *Our Naked Frailties: Sensational Art and Meaning in Macbeth* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), p. 45.

The second sense of equivocation--and this is of great aesthetic import in the play--relates not so much to the connotative possibilities of units of language as such, as to the intention that governs the use of language once these possibilities are recognized.[6] More specifically, it relates to the awareness of choice, and to a decision to deceive as the outgrowth of that intention. Thus, it involves the presentation of a univocal facade of meaning that appears to obscure the recognition of ambiguity. Equivocation in this sense of the word is clearly the comic subject of the drunken porter later on (II. iii. 9-13)--the relevance of whose quips to the scandal caused by Father Garnet's apology for this form of amphibology needs no discussion at this point.

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[5] Norman Rabkin, Shakespeare and the Common Understanding (London: Collier-Macmillan, Ltd., 1967), pp. 12-13.

[6] See O.E.D., "equivocation," definition 2: "The use of words or expressions that are susceptible of a double signification, with a view to mislead; esp. the expression of a virtual falsehood in the form of a porposition which (in order to satisfy the speaker's conscience) is verbally true."

I have earlier commented on this second sense of equivocation as a form of deception discussed and practiced by men such as Persons and Garnet in order to save their lives without compromising their commitment to Catholicism: their chief ploy was the technique of withholding one half of a proposition in order to deceive their hearers with the half spoken. This ploy is not without its relevance to "Fair is foul, and foul is fair." That fair may be foul and foul fair, with reference to antithetical systems of value, is indeed true, as has been demonstrated above. But that fair is also fair, and foul foul, in terms of the values to which the speakers do not subscribe, is a truth also, and a more basic one, perhaps, than the other. The Witches, as their unhesitating obedience to their familiars suggests, are so immersed in the realms of evil that the possible validity of this unspoken truth may not arise for them, although it must do so for the audience. Their role, after all, in the grand design of the play, involves not the making of choices but the presentation to the hero of opportunities for choice. Nevertheless, the patent absence of recognition of the contrary of what they profess, whether or not intention is involved, is an objective example of equivocal deceit. What is more, the mere possibility here that they wilfully deceive themselves has significance as a nebulous foreshadowing of the self-imposed moral blindness that is central to Macbeth's decision-making in the crucial final scene of Act I. In that scene Macbeth becomes an equivocator who, in his choice of the meaning of words, attempts to deceive himself.

Macbeth's first words, "So foul and fair a day . . ." (I. iii. 38), as I have earlier said, ironically echo, and yet contrast with, the earlier "Fair is foul" (I. i. 11). Furthermore, they are spoken in the (as yet unnoticed) presence of the Witches. This coincidence should alert us to the establishment of a significant relationship between the two expressions: tension exists between echo and counterstatement, but the present emphasis on contrast could yield, it seems, to an emphasis on similarity. The emphasized contrast suggests that the first words spoken by Macbeth represent a resumé of his normal values and judgments. The element of similarity or echo, at the same time subtly establishes the nature of the threat to those norms.

The validity of discussing the significance of Macbeth's first sentence in the above manner is supported by the very structure of the play at this point. Act I, Scenes ii-v involve an elaborate analysis of Macbeth's qualities. This analysis is presented in the form of a triptych portrayal of his habitual values and virtues, coupled with either explicit or implicit definition of the threat to them arising out of the prophecies. The first panel of the triptych (Act I, Scene ii) has as its motif the preeminence of Macbeth as warrior and the relationship of heroic virtue to what we recognize as the moral virtues of Renaissance humanism.[7] The third section (Act I, Scene v) has as theme the clash of morality with expedience, of humanistic values with naturalistic *virtù*. The central compartment of the formal tri-partite "character" (Act I, Scenes iii-iv) depicts the encounter of the hero with temptation and his recognition of a threat to the wholeness of life--the shaking of his "single state of man"--implicit in the prophecies. Two scenes of what might be called "characterization by opinion" surround that in which Macbeth encounters the occasion for the horrible imaginings that can overpower him in their terrifying attractiveness.

The formal, structural contrast of the opinions of the principals in these scenes is reflected in Act I, Scene iii: the contrast between Duncan's comments on Macbeth's virtues in language that reflects Christian-humanist values and Lady Macbeth's evaluation of those same virtues in terms of a Machiavellian ethic of egoistic necessity parallels the balancing of Banquo's moral caution about tempting, trifling truths with Macbeth's propensity to act according to the promptings of an instant that smothers "function" in "surmise" (I. iii. 141). The question that underlies all three scenes is: What is the metaphysical status of moral good and evil? The answer to that question is two-fold: for Duncan and Banquo--and for Macbeth when he asks, "If good, why do I yield to that suggestion . . . ?"--good and evil are absolutes transcending the exigencies of time and place and personal inclination. For Lady Macbeth, on the other hand, and--potentially, at least, for Macbeth when he allows that "this supernatural soliciting/Cannot be ill,"--a relativistic view of good and evil is attractive: according to this latter view, moral values are "expedient products of human evolution--in a word, the creatures not the creators of action and situation."[8] The structural interplay of the ideas of moral relativists and absolutists is focused in alternating emphasis upon the absolutists' key word "worthy" and the relativists' primary concern with "greatness."

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[7] The relationship between heroic and moral virtue was a subject of endless and unresolved debate in the Renaissance. For a history of this debate, see Eugene F. Waith, *The Herculean Hero* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962), pp. 39-59.

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[8] Robert Hoopes, "Fideism and Scepticism during the Renaissance: Three Major Witnesses," Huntington Library Quarterly, 14 (1950-51), p. 339.

The interplay of ideas of "greatness," relating to egoistical success, and "worthy" relating to social and moral virtue, is focused, first of all on the theme of honour. In Act I, Scene ii the concept of honour is given primary emphasis. This is achieved in various ways: the principal speakers, Duncan and the wounded Captain, make worthiness and nobility their principal theme; they contrast Macbeth's (and Banquo's) loyal service with the twin evils of domestic insurrection and foreign invasion; furthermore, in their praise of Macbeth, they establish a contrast between Fortune and Herculean virtue that quite clearly suggests a vision of Macbeth as hero worthy of admiration.[9]

In the conversations of the royal party he is presented not only as a man of honour but also as a man of unified being. The explicit suggestions of this characterization of Macbeth are that his soldierly virtue is harnessed to justice of cause. If we examine the implications of these suggestions, we can deduce that this unity of being, this coherence of opposites within Macbeth, is related to an admirable harmony of the physical and spiritual components of his nature. He is the virtuous soldier, the good man, because he commits himself to action in circumstances in which physical good (his martial prowess) and metaphysical good (his virtuous loyalty) are fused in ideal unity. Likewise, in these circumstances, and also because of his attitudes, he encounters no disparity between physical and metaphysical evil. What is in metaphysical terms evil is clearly identifiable with the successive enemy armies he faces on the field of battle. Thus, the status of Macbeth's virtue is clearly established and the significance of his harmonious life is revealed. Yet the whole scene and all that it affirms is undercut with irony, coming as it does after the complex ambiguities of the Witches' dialogue in Act I, Scene i. Hence, to recognize within Act I, Scene ii the almost inevitable promise of problems surrounding the word "honour" and words such as "worthy" which are synonymous therewith is to respond meaningfully to the ambiguities that already involve us with the problem of the equivocal.

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[9] Matthew Proser, The Heroic Image (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1965), p. 58, also suggests that this scene establishes Macbeth as an admirable hero.

The ironies in Act I, Scene ii are not confined to those affected by juxtaposition of scenes. There are subtle Sophoclean ironies here too. For example, the interplay between the intention of the speakers and the wider implications of their utterances achieves a complex effect: we are presented with a portrait of a hero great and good, but the speaker's emphasis on greatness and goodness does not preclude the audience's awareness that the hero's greatness and goodness are tied to a ruthlessness and savagery which, if not surrounded by the validating sanctions of loyalty and just cause, would be horrific in their destructiveness.[10] This dramatic effect parallels a traditional humanist attitude to the limitations of valour, an attitude reflected by Sir Thomas Elyot when he says: "Although I have now rehearsed sundry examples to the commendation of fortitude concerning acts martial, yet by the way I would have it remembered that the praise is properly to be referred unto the virtue, that is to say, to enterprise things dreadful, either for the public weal or for winning of perpetual honour, or else for eschewing reproach or dishonour. Whereunto to be annexed these considerations, what importance the enterprise is, and wherefore it is done . . . . For (as Tully saith) to enter to battle and to fight unadvisedly, it is a thing wild and in the manner of beasts, but thou shalt fight valiantly when time requireth, and also necessity."[11] The ironies of Act I, Scene ii make us aware that there are ambivalent responses to valour which are not experienced by Duncan and his subjects while they laud Macbeth as the compleat warrior.

Though, as I have suggested, the ironic undertones of Act I, Scene ii make us conscious of a threatening potential in Macbeth's heroic prowess, the primary focus of the scene is upon his actual virtues. And it is significant that when the bleeding Captain undertakes to put into words his "knowledge of the broil" he does so by contrasting villainous Macdonwald and virtuous Macbeth in terms of their relation to Fortune (herself no mean equivocator, if actions speak as words do). The rebel's insurrection is described first of all as a perversion of worthiness and of nature; he is

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[10] G. Wilson Knight, *The Imperial Theme*, third edition (1951; London: Methuen, 1965), p. 126.

[11] *The Book named The Governor*, I. iii, Everyman's Library edition, ed. S.E. Lehmberg (London: J.M. Dent and Co., 1962), p. 185.

> Worthy to be a rebel, for to that
> The multiplying villainies of nature
> Do swarm upon him.
>
> (I. ii. 10-12)

Then Macdonwald's discomfiture is associated with his dependence upon the favours of smiling, whore-like Fortune.

The Captain's reference to fortune is not without moral significance; it is an aspect of the characterization of Macbeth as the truly good man. The antinomic relationship between virtue and fortune is traditional. Boethius' De consolatione philosophiae, a book which teaches that by directing his attention to things divine man can transcend fortune's blows and favours,[12] made the opposition a commonplace of Medieval thought. The writings of Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio had their part in the popularizing of the tradition and in establishing a continuity between Boethius and the Christian humanists. In England the influence of Boccaccio was insured by Lydgate's Fall of Princes, and in Shakespeare's youth Petrarch's De remediis utriusque Fortunae appeared in translation as Phisicke against Fortune.[13] Writings as diverse as those of Leon-Battista Alberti in Italy, Pierre de La Primaudaye[14] in France and William Baldwin[15] in England deal with the conventional antithesis between Christian virtue and fortune. In The Book of the Courtier the same tradition underlies Castiglione's assertion that the excellence of Duke Guido "is attested by his many and diverse calamities, which he always bore with such strength of spirit that his virtue was never overcome by Fortune."[16] Underlying all of these discussions there is a view of human potential that is basic to the optimism of the humanist ideal as asserted by Cristoforo Landino in his Quaestiones Camaldulenses: "We are brought forth by nature in order that we may act virtuously and search out truth."[17] The bloody Captain's reference to the "villainies of nature" would seem to appeal to such a view.

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[12] See Howard R. Patch, "Fortune's Wheel and Boethius," Modern Language Notes, 29 (1912), p. 197.

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[13] Phisicke Against Fortune, as well prosperous, as adverse, conteyned in two Bookes . . . now first Englished by Thomas Twyne (London: printed by Richard Watkyns, 1579); STC #19809.

[14] See Don Cameron Allen, "Renaissance Remedies against Fortune: Marlowe and the Fortunati," Studies in Philology, 38 (1941), 188-97, n. 5, where he directs our attention to Alberti's Opuscoli Morali (Venice, 1568), pp. 270-274 and to l'Académie Françoise (Paris, 1580), pp. 225-30. The latter work was very widely read in England, to judge by the numerous translations and editions that appeared following the translation, by T. B[owes], of the first part in 1586. For an account of the history of editions and translations of the various parts of The French Academie prior to the publication of the translation of the complete work in 1618, see Lily B. Campbell, Shakespeare's Tragic Heroes (1930; rpt. New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1966), p. 19, n. 1.

[15] In A Mirror for Magistrates (1559) the recurrent theme of Fortune's fickleness is complemented by the various ghosts' utterances about Divine Justice as the ultimate tribunal for those who depart from virtue. See Lily B. Campbell, "Introduction," The Mirror for Magistrates (1938; New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1960), pp. 54-55. Though the section on "Fortune" in A Treatise of Morall Philosophie is merely a compilation of classical apophthegms, it implicitly appeals to a Christian concept of virtue: the introductory chapters to each book and the hortatory "summe of all" conclusions to each chapter show that the Treatise is informed by the Erasmian ideal of classical wisdom interpreted as a buttress to revelation. See Paul M. Gaudet, "William Baldwin's A Treatise of Moral Philosophy (1564): A Variorum Edition with Introduction" (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton University, 1972), pp. 36-69.

Having associated Fortune with vice in his remarks about Macdonwald, the Captain then refers to Macbeth's disdain of her favours, implicitly dissociating him from the perversion and unnaturalness that make his adversary "merciless." Hence, in their context, expressions such as "brave Macbeth" and "Valour's minion" and the whole description of the insurgent and his rebellion leave no doubt that bravery and valour in the present broil are virtues in a moral as well as a military sense. What is more, because Fortune is

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[16] The Book of the Courtier, I, iii; Anchor Books edition, tr. Charles S. Singleton (New York: Doubleday and Co., 1959), p. 302.

[17] From the first dialogue--quoted Hiram Haydn, The Counter-Renaissance (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1950), p. 56.

traditionally associated with chance and mutability, the man who disdains her associates himself with constancy and with the ordered process of time. Indeed, when the speaker goes on to describe the ensuing victory over Norway (who, in his turn, as indicated by the phrase "surveying vantage" [l. 31] is also, pointedly, dependent on Chance) the progression to this second segment of the account reinforces the notion of a Macbeth constant in those virtues that seem indissolubly tied to justice.

The dramatic importance of Macbeth's indifference to Fortune's ephemeral gifts and the association of this indifference with the order of benignant nature should not be underestimated, especially since the significance of this first impression of the protagonist is underlined by the popular sixteenth-century conception of an irreconcilable feud between Nature and Fortune. In an essay entitled "Time, Chance and Fortune,"[18] Rudolf Wittkower has provided an interesting range of iconographical representation of this conception. The evidence he presents suggests a recurrent symbolic statement about the quality of the gifts proffered by these contending goddesses. In As You Like It Rosalind provides a precise resume of traditional attitudes, when she asserts that "Fortune reigns in gifts of the world, not in the lineaments of Nature" (I. ii. 39-40). These attitudes are so popular, in fact, that so "desartless" a philosopher as Dogberry can use them for a point of information.[19] The gifts of the world referred to by Rosalind are accidental and, hence, in the moralist's view, of little value. Nature's lineaments, on the contrary, are essential rather than accidental; hence they can be of positive value, unless, of course, they are wilfully prevented; Nature's lineaments are her gifts, endowments such as strength, courage, nobility, virtue and wisdom.

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[18] The Journal of the Warburg Institute, I (1937-38), 313-21.

In artistic statements about the unending conflict between the two forces, Nature is frequently represented by one of her gifts, most frequently by one of the natural virtues, wherein lies her superiority over Fortune. Perhaps the most succinct expression of the relationship between natural virtue and the idea of "disdaining Fortune" is the inscription on a medal designed by Cellini for Francois I of France in 1537: "FORTUNAM VIRTUTE DEVICIT." Wittkower draws attention to the title-page woodcut in the 1523 Paris edition of Petrarch's De remediis utriusque Fortunae, which shows the goddess Fortuna precariously balanced on a sphere--the emblem of her traditional association with chance and mutability[20]--in opposition in Sapientia, shown looking into the mirror of Prudence and seated on a rectangular pillar symbolizing Constancy. Eugene F. Rice draws attention to another such woodcut, illustrating (and based on) the text of Carolus Bovillus' Liber de sapientia (1511), in which the wise man is pictured saying, "Put your trust in virtue; Fortune is fickler than the waves of the sea."[21] Most interesting of all in relation to the bleeding Captain's celebration of the military hero's self-sufficiency is an engraving by Marc Antonio Raimondi, in which Fortune is being chastized by a figure identified by Wittkower as Herculean Virtue.[22] That this too is a popular motif is suggested by its being the theme of a pageant presented before Lucrezia Borgia in 1502.[23] It is a recurring idea in the works of Machiavelli, whose political realism, however, does not allow for any surely predictable outcome in the struggle with Fortune.[24] Yet, for Machiavelli, the man who is characterized by virtù is one who, by the purposefulness of his actions in the fields of war and politics, asserts a control over his own existence, and is the antithesis of those who become Fortune's thralls by failing to initiate, or persevere in, action.[25] Virtù in this sense, has a quasi-moral significance, for it suggests perfection of soul.[26] From these few examples it is apparent that in the culture of the Renaissance virtue--both moral and martial--is related to independence from Fortune and especially to constancy in fortitude. Hence the tradition supports Duncan's assumption that his "valiant cousin" is indeed a "worthy gentleman," and that the actions leading to the beheading of Macdonwald "smack of honour" no less than the words and wounds of him who describes them.

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[19] See Much Ado About Nothing, III. iii. 13-15. See also Twelfth Night, II. iv. 82-85, where Orsino distinguishes between the essential gifts of nature and the gifts of fortune (in this case "dirty lands").

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[20] See Howard Rollins Patch, The Tradition of the Goddess Fortuna in Roman Literature, Smith College Studies, III, 3 (Northampton, Mass., 1922), p. 145 especially, where he discusses the prevalence of this association in Roman thought.

[21] Rice, The Renaissance Idea of Wisdom (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1958), p. 214.

[22] Wittkower, p. 319.

[23] See H.R. Patch, The Tradition of the Goddess Fortuna in Medieval Literature and Philosophy, Smith College Studies III, 4 (Northampton, Mass., 1922), p. 225. Ernst Cassirer, in The Individual and the Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy, pp. 73-74, also mentions this pageant, but he dates it "towards the end of 1501" (p. 73).

A second aspect of the Captain's reference to the Fortune theme (that reinforces the impression of Macbeth's self-sufficiency and virtue) is his echo of the Ovidian idea of "fortuna meretrix"[27] in "Show'd like a rebel's whore." This parallels Hamlet's view of the goddess as strumpet,[28] and by analogy may suggest that Macbeth's disdain grows out of an ideal commingling of blood and judgment--the passionate zeal of the warrior and the loyalty of the faithful subject--so that, unlike Macdonwald, he is not, in Hamlet's words, "a pipe for Fortune's finger/To sound what stop she please" (Hamlet, III. ii. 67-68). Furthermore, Hamlet recognizes a haphazard relationship between Fortune and justice in the jocose enquiry, "What have you, my friends, deserved at the hands of Fortune, that she sends you to prison hither?" (II. ii. 239-41), and the parallel between this and the idea of Macdonwald's merited punishment is noteworthy. By contrast, it is because Macbeth's soldierly wrath is directly linked to justice that he is proof against the whims of the whorish goddess; virtue with valour arm'd transcends her capriciousness:

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[24] For an intensive study of this topic, see Thomas Flanagan, "The Concept of Fortuna in Machiavelli," in The Political Calculus: Essays on Machiavelli's Philosophy, ed. Anthony Parel (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972), pp. 127-56.

[25] See Neal Wood, "Machiavelli's Humanism of Action," Parel, pp. 46-47.

[26] See Flanagan's discussion of the historical development of the concept of arité or virtus, Parel, p. 143.

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[27] The notion of Fortune as whore also appears in King John, III. i. 56, Hamlet, II. ii. 233, 481 and King Lear, II. iv. 50. The locus classicus of this idea is Ovid's "Dum [Fortuna] furtivos timide profitetur amores,/Caelestemque homini concubuisse pudet,/ Arsit enim magno correpta cupidine regis,/ Caecaque in hoc uno non fuit illa viro" Fasti, VI, 567-70. The lines may be translated as follows: While [Fortune] confessed bashfully her furtive love, she felt ashamed that she, a goddess, had played the whore with a man--for she burned with an overpowering lust for the king, and was blind to all man but him alone.

[28] Hamlet, II. ii. 233 and III. ii. 70-73.

> The passions when moderated by temperance [says Castiglione's Signor Ottaviani] are an aid to virtue, just as wrath aids fortitude.[29]

The alliance between wrath and virtue--"noble courage . . . the garment of the virtues"[30] in Elyot's words--is thus the chief attribute of Macbeth.

Since humanists held that valour is both an ornament and an aid to virtue, it is clear that for them the valiant warrior's independence of Fortune has a moral basis. This assumption is implicit in the dialogue of Act I, Scene ii of Macbeth. Evaluating the dialogue on the basis of this assumption, we can say that the prudent coupling of wrath and loyalty which enables Macbeth so successfully to "curb [the] lavish spirit" of adversity is a form of moral probity. In this Macbeth is expected to persevere, for King Duncan acts as if the treachery of doomed Cawdor is an aberration that he can compensate for by transferring the title to "noble Macbeth" (I. iii. 65-69). The chief attribute of Macbeth, then, is the prudence that preserves his unity of being. He is, in sum, a wise man, as the verbal portrait of him suggests. To call his prudence wisdom is in keeping with the humanist transformation of the concept of wisdom from docta pietas to prudentia. The history of this transformation shows that in humanist thought up to the middle of the sixteenth century wisdom was identified with the contemplative or intellectual, but, thereafter, was primarily identified with the active life and the exercise of the will. The concept changed from its Augustinian interpretation as "rerum humanarum divinarumque scientia" to its definition as a code of ethical precepts indistinguishable from prudence in the "probité bien advisée" and "preude prudence" of Pierre Charron's "habile et fort preud'homme" in De la Sagesse (1601).[31]

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[29] The Courtier, IV, 18.

[30] The Governor, III. xiv.

The attribution to Macbeth of that prudence which is wisdom is subtly suggested by Rosse's statement:

> Sweno, the Norways' King, craves composition;
> Nor would we deign him burial of his men
> Till he disbursed at St. Colme's Inch
> Ten thousand dollars . . .
>
> (ll. 61-64; emphasis mine)

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[31] See Rice, The Renaissance Idea of Wisdom, passim, for an extensive treatment of the subject. Rice suggests that from Petrarch's "De sapientia" (De remediis, I. 12) to Charron's De la sagesse (the most important Renaissance treatise on the subject) the humanist constant is the desirable co-existence of virtue and prudence, and that the most influential trend, after the publication of Cardan's De Sapientia (1540) and Le Caron's Dialogues (1556), was the solution of equating prudence and wisdom. The fundamentally ethical understanding of wisdom was, he says, characteristic by the time of Montaigne, Du Vair, and needless to say, Charron.

I have underlined the word "we" because it reveals that, the battle ended, Macbeth (I take it that "Bellona's bridegroom" refers to him) does not insist on playing a foremost-soldier role when he and Rosse and others determine the conditions of truce with Norway. This would suggest that in his case outstanding martial ability is accommodated within an order of discipline which is essential to the nobility (I. ii. 69) and worthiness (I. ii. 25 and I. iv. 14) that Duncan so unequivocally attributes to Macbeth. The King's opinion allows for no tension between his general's heroic prowess and personal integrity, as is evident from the implicit contrast between Glamis and Cawdor at the end of the scene, and as will again be manifested in Scene iv when he honours Macbeth with the compliment "More is thy due than more than all can pay" (I. iv. 21); it is evident too in the "plant thee . . . full of growing" conceit (I. iv. 28-33) and, yet again, in Duncan's courteous conversation with Lady Macbeth in Scene vi. In Duncan's statements, just as in Rosse's "we", we are implicitly directed towards a consideration of Macbeth's greatness with reference to Aristotle's magnanimous man who, while entitled to the high opinion of his fellows, claims no more than his due, thus avoiding the extreme of hubristic conceit.[32]

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[32] Nicomachean Ethics IV, 3; trans. Martin Ostwald (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1962) p. 94.

Duncan's approval of the assertions of the Captain and Rosse is the climax of what I earlier called "characterization by opinion." His conferring of the Cawdor title on Macbeth implies a contrast between graced Glamis and disgraced Cawdor, a contrast associated with the high humanistic ideal of order manifested in constancy and virtue--the ideal which Erasmus suggests is realized in "Wisdom, solidarity and good deeds."[33] Duncan's gesture in so honouring the hero is a signal of his recognition that Macbeth is graced by what Chapman calls that "preserve of vertue" without which "nothing lasts."[34] But the ironic dimensions of the scene rather forcefully define a potential in Macbeth to become, like Hotspur, "Fortune's minion" (I Henry IV, I. i. 83) and to court her who, in the words of that verbose moralist Fluellen, "is turning and inconstant, and mutability; [whose] foot, look you, is fixed upon a spherical stone, which rolls, and rolls, and rolls" (Henry V, III. vi. 33-35). Since Duncan has unqualified faith in the one-to-one relationship between word and reality, it is ironic that he fails to see that, in terms of his own theory of language, to confer the title "Cawdor" on Glamis is to give to him the role which that title has hitherto signified. Thus Duncan's action is related, indirectly at least, to the theme of equivocation. His words and action are ambiguous, and he fails to perceive aspects of their full meaning. The difference between him and the equivocator is that the latter is aware of the ambiguity and intentionally causes shades of significance to be evaded.

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[33] The Education of a Christian Prince, trans. Lester K. Born (New York: Octagon Books, 1965), p. 149.

[34] George Chapman, "Hymnus in Cynthiam;" l. 403, The Poems of George Chapman, ed. Phyllis B. Bartlett (London: Oxford University Press, 1941), p. 39.

The ironies of Act I, Scene ii involve the audience in an Erasmian awareness that Macbeth's passionate defence of Duncan's cause is a virtuous performance so akin to sheer vicious destructiveness that those who describe, and hear described, his heroic exploits are unaware of the possiibility of confusing the two.[35] Macbeth's disdain for Fortune deserves the praise it gets, but no one seems to note that it is combined with a disdain for the civilities of chivalric combat, Macbeth unseams his adversary "from nave to chops" (l. 22), we are told, and we should notice that he does so with a stroke so unorthodox that it finds no place in the handbooks of swordsmanship read by at least some members of the play's original audiences.[36] There is a note of fierce excess in "brandish'd steel,/Which smok'd with bloody execution" (ll. 17-18). And to both Banquo and Macbeth the Captain attributes the will "to bathe in reeking wounds": this expression suggests that in the heat of action they may be more dedicated to the task of memorizing another Golgotha (I.L. 40-42) than aware of the justice of the cause they promote. The potential to confuse virtue and vice is thus suggested. Furthermore, the emblems of superiority and fearlessness, the "eagle" and the "lion" (l. 35),are contextually associated not with royalty of nature but, rather, with destructive irascibility, and the "cannons overcharg'd" simile (ll. 36-37) bespeaks excessive destruction. Similarly, the phrase "whence comfort seem'd to come/Discomfort swells" (ll. 26-27) casts an ominous pall of ambivalence over the happy tidings that follow, though its ambiguity is never so explicit here as when we hear it re-echoed in "the swelling act of the imperial theme." Likewise, when we read (especially in the ironic light cast on them by later events) the following lines:

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[35] Erasmus states that certain passions are so similar to virtues that one can be deceived as to the subtle distinctions between them. See *Enchiridion Militis Christiani*, I, 5. In general, Renaissance psychologists make no clear opposition between passion and virtue. The passions in harmony with reason were seen as conducive to virtue. This is the view presented by Stephen Batman, who drew upon a wide range of influential Renaissance treatises in enriching (while translating) fourteenth-century Anglicus Bartholomaeus's *De Proprietatibus Rerum* (See *Batman uppon Bartholome*, Book III [London, 1582; STC # 1538], *passim*). It is only when passion becomes intemperate or, in Ludowyk Bryskett's word, disordinate, that they are deemed vicious (*A Discourse of Civill Life* [London, 1606; STC #3958], p. 86). For an extensive discussion of the psychology of the passions in the Renaissance, see Ruth L. Anderson, *Elizabethan Psychology and Shakespearian Plays*, University of Illinois Studies in the Humanities, III (Iowa City: The University, 1927), pp. 69-131.

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[36] See Vincentio Saviolo, Vincentio Saviolo his Practise (London, 1594), the first book of which deals exclusively with the techniques of fighting with rapier and dagger, and Giacomo di Grassi, Di Grassi his true Arte of Defence . . . Englished by I.G. Gentleman (London, 1594) which provides a do-it-yourself guide to the use of and defence against rapier, single sword, two-hand sword and numerous other weapons. None

> Bellona's bridegroom, lapp'd in proof,
> Confronted him with self-comparisons,
> Point against point, rebellious arm 'gainst arm
> (ll. 55-57)

we cannot fail to note that "proof" applies to warrior prowess rather than to moral virtue, and that the odd syntax of the sentence seems to associate "rebellious arm" with the victor rather than the vanquished. Finally, the very word-order of the last line of the scene, Duncan's "What he hath lost, noble Macbeth hath won," invests the Cawdor title with won-lost ambiguity and structurally surrounds the word "noble" with echoes of the equivocal quality of the language of the opening scene.

The dramatic ironies surrounding so many of the utterances of Act I, Scene II and especially the significance we discover in Duncan's conferring a new title on Macbeth is a carefully devised back-drop against which we can judge Macbeth's growing awareness of ambiguity in the following scene, where we find him seek a release from his moral dilemma in the words "If Chance will have me King, why, Chance may crown me,/Without my stir" (I. iii. 144-45). He reveals

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of these discussions includes mention of any sword-stroke but the thrust. Macbeth, it would seem, has deliberately disemboweled his fallen opponent or has used a most unorthodox hay-maker of an uppercut--either of which would seem very savage.

in these words his recognition of the potential in him to become "Cawdor" in a sense unintended and unattended by the good Duncan. In the antithesis between the king's unawareness of the ambiguous and Macbeth's awareness thereof, Shakespeare carries forward the theme of equivocation and stresses the role of knowledge and will in all that this theme implies about the nature of moral choice.

We have seen in the discussion so far that the first two scenes of Macbeth involve the playgoer in the experience of apprehension and attune him to the problem of ambiguity in such a way that he recognizes the inter-relatedness of dualities in language and dualities in the heroic soldier's nature. These scenes indicate that the central concern of the play will be to present equivocal words and equivocal bravery as interrelated aspects of the same problem. That this is indeed the promise of the opening scenes becomes apparent as soon as Macbeth encounters the Witches in the third scene.

The opening scene introduces the problem of ambiguous language: words are deprived of secure meanings by Witches who are as wayward in utterance as they are in form and behaviour. The ensuing scene introduces a threatened society experiencing the release of victory, united in admiration for a martial hero who is acknowledged to be the

the epitome of virtue, and who is rewarded accordingly. But, as I have shown, the celebration of victory witnessed by the audience elicits an ambivalent response, because no one among the _dramatis personae_ manifests a critical mistrust of ruthless soldierly activity. There is on the part of the various speakers an assumption that victory over the evil that has threatened the harmony of the state is, as it were, final. The King's declaration, "No more _that_ Thane of Cawdor shall deceive/Our bosom interest" (I. ii. 65-66; emphasis added) suggests, with exquisite dramatic irony, that the new Thane of Cawdor may have in him the potential to engage in the form of deceit with which the condemned thane astounded Duncan. The King, despite Cawdor's perfidy, has learned nothing. His conviction that the ideal of loyalty is the norm of his subject's behaviour remains undisturbed. The possibility that anyone, least of all this new thane, may exercise his heroic destructiveness outside of the ideal confines of loyalty is not encountered. The reaction of the audience must, almost inevitably, be one of awe at so perfectly secure an innocence; this awe is coupled with an awareness that the threat to that innocence--which is also the naiveté of idealism--must, almost inevitably, come from the successor to "_that_ Thane of Cawdor."

Macbeth has already not only established itself as a play about rebellion and usurpation, but also as a play about language. And in Act I, Scene ii, Shakespeare establishes a parallel between the royal party's assumptions about soldierly loyalty and discipline and its assumptions about language. The auditor or hearer who is aware of the parallel is led to expect that the threat to the innocence, or naiveté, of Duncan and his society may arise from problems linguistic as much as from problems associated with the military hero's familiarity with death-dealing.

The Duncan world is characterized in Act I, Scene ii as one powerfully committed to the ideal of loyal heroism and to the idea of rhetoric based on truth. Language, like all other outward signs (such as the recent seeming loyalty of Cawdor), is expected to have a one-to-one relationship with reality, and the possibility that this ideal relationship need not obtain in every eventuality is not considered. This assumption about the nature of eloquence is common to all speakers and listeners. The prolix utterances of the wounded Captain, for example, are accepted by his hearers as a perfectly reliable projection of fact. The same is true of the reaction to Rosse's disclosures later in the scene. The validity of the implicit theory of rhetoric in the present circumstances is notable: fact and narration perfectly coincide. Both the Captain and Rosse describe the heroic activities of Macbeth and Banquo, activities in which martial and moral virtue blend into an ideal unity. In the descriptions of various phases of the day's warfare, the intentions of the speakers are harnessed to truth and loyalty, and, thus, the expectation that words mirror knowledge is validated. By dint of these effects the scene establishes the rhetorical and behavioral norms from which the world of the play is to deviate--and to which it can return only when Macbeth is finally destroyed. When Lenox remarks,

> What a haste looks through his eyes! So should he look
> That seems to speak things strange,
> (ll. 47-48)

he expects appearance and truth to coincide. The "strange" revelations provided by Rosse (ll. 49-59) about the "strange" perfidy of "a gentleman in whom [the King] built/An absolute trust" (I. iv. 13-14) justifies Lenox's perception and expectation. Rosse's facial and oral expression directly reflect the knowledge he has to convey: eye and tongue provide complementary expressions that cohere into a unified statement of truth. In this way the norm is established, but Rosse's news also indicates the direction of deviation--Cawdor's perfidious betrayal of trust.

The norm is identified with the world of the absolutists who, dedicated as they are to idealistic conceptions of worth, nobility and honour, speak and listen in a manner that suggests their immunity from relativistic values. The failure to recognize the reality of the threat to such immunity is suggested in the ironic undercurrents of the scene: deceit may betray the work-knowledge ideal; "valour" cannot be simplistically translated as "honour"; acts, utterances and values all threaten to be sundered by the equivocal. The world of Duncan is safe only so long as the ideal of the absolutists remains the pattern of speech and action of all who live in that already threatened world. As the play itself expresses it, that world is safe only if men respond as Banquo does to the encounter with the relativistic and equivocal--by reasserting the superiority of the ideals and truth and of behaviour essential to the order centred on Duncan, when the rough beast of selfishness and dissimulation slouches towards its disordered Bethlehem to be born.

But that the Duncan world is threatened is suggested, just as the nature of the threat to it is suggested, in the sequence of scenes. The Witches provide an ironic prologue and epilogue to Act I, Scene ii. The royal party has no sooner left the stage than, to the sound of thunder, the Witches appear once more to signal dramatically the onrush of the equivocal. Appropriately, they are intent upon foulness that to them is fair, and, thus, they provide what we recognize as a counter-statement to all that was asserted by the speakers who preceded them:

1 Witch. Her husband's to Aleppo gone, master o' th' Tiger;
But in a sieve I'll thither sail,
And like a rat without a tail;
I'll do, I'll do, and I'll do.

2 Witch. I'll give thee a wind.

1 Witch. Th' art kind.

3 Witch. And I another.
(ll. 7-13)

The first Witch, intent upon a vengeance that seems ineffably evil (l. 10), terms her co-operative partner's enthusiasm "kind." It is hardly necessary to examine the role of that word in Hamlet or King Lear, nor indeed to remark on how the triteness of the rhyme deprives it of dignity, to recognize the characteristic inversion of values. Such inversion establishes an antithesis to the values of the royal group that has just quit the stage. In terms of these transcendent values, "kind" is debauched by the dealers in equivocation. Thus, the re-appearance of the Witches completes the introduction of a theme that sets the play's direction. Their role here intimates the nature of the tragedy, because it is at this point that we are introduced to the tragic hero, who, henceforth, will have to strive, not just against the despicable Swenos and Macondwalds whose evil he has easily suppressed, but against the attractive evils of inverted values and distorted language, the force of which he is ill prepared to combat.

When Macbeth and Banquo finally appear, the relationship between words and knowledge becomes thematically central. Banquo's "are you aught/That man may question?" (I. iii. 42-43) and his partner's "Speak, if you can:--What are you?" (l. 47) are probes that would reach to the heart of the mystery of those creatures whose appearance forbids interpretation (l. 46). But these probes reach nowhere, and the intention that guides them is ignored by those "imperfect speakers" (l. 70) the Witches, who provide answers that are not answers to the questions directed at them. This technique of providing irrelevant replies to queries is a vice of language which Renaissance rhetoricians labeled *heterogenium*.[37] The dramatic import of the hags' use of *heterogenium* is noteworthy, because this rhetorical device signals Macbeth's encounter with the subversion of the ideal of communication assumed to be normal by his society in the preceding scene. The non-answer phenomenon might also be seen as a rather gross analogue to the equivocator's ploy of suppressing aspects of truth.

That Macbeth, who in Act I, Scene ii was established as the epitome of what is admirable in the Duncan society, is typical of that society in his unpreparedness for the break-down in honest communication is suggested by expectations implicit in "Speak, if you can:--What are you?" and by his inability adequately to cope with the irrelevant and tantalizing rejoinders to the question. The Witches' reply is a triple prophecy which turns the question back upon himself, implicitly making "What are you?" apply to his identity rather than theirs:

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[37] See Sister Miriam Joseph, *Shakespeare's Use of the Arts of Language* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1947), p.66.

> All hail, Macbeth! hail to thee, Thane of Glamis!
> All hail, Macbeth! hail to thee, Thane of Cawdor!
> All hail, Macbeth! that shalt be King hereafter.
>
> (ll. 48-50)

The prophecies are words which have no direct relation to the question that precedes them. Neither do they have a direct relation to absolute truth. They are predictions which suggest ends but not means; what they may imply for Macbeth as man-of-action and what may be the moral implications of his role in their fulfilment depend on his interpretation of their meaning. They are equivocal in that their moral implications are suppressed. He must interpret their whole significance, and his interpretation of that will define him.

The truth of the prophecies seems absolute but, since it depends upon the shape which Macbeth's response may give it, it is merely relative. Thus, Macbeth is here introduced to the problem of relativism. That, like his King and his society in general, he is ill-prepared to solve that problem is suggested by the contrast between his "rapt" reaction to the Witches' utterances and Banquo's detached, analytical and morally acute response to them.

There is a distinct contrast between Macbeth's attitude to the validity of the Witches' words and that of Banquo. Banquo's response to what sounds, but may not be, fair is couched in reservations: he appeals to the Witches in the name of truth itself, and reveals a sceptical non-commitment to their prophetic powers. This is evident in "If you can look into the seeds of time . . ." (1. 58) and in his declared indifference to their favours. Macbeth, on the contrary, "rapt withal," responds on the basis of the assumption that words are reliable mirrors of knowledge. He demands a quantitative extension of their utterances--"Tell me more" (1. 70)--showing none of Banquo's healthy scepticism. His "Speak, I charge you" (1. 78), though demanding the discovery of the source of their intelligence, reflects no uncertainty about the veracity, as opposed to the completeness (for it is in this sense that to him they are "imperfect speakers") of their utterances. The assumption of a one-to-one relationship between what is known and what is said also underlay Malcolm's earlier invitation to the bleeding captain: "Say to the King the knowledge of the broil,/As thou didst leave it" (I. ii. 6-7). But whereas then the wounded soldier observed decorum,[38] reflecting in extraordinary language the extraordinary feats of the valiant, now there is a refusal to validate the ideal relationship between words and knowledge, and this refusal is absolute: the Witches, silent, vanish.

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[38] It is interesting to note that the rhetorical decorum of the Duncan world is basically Augustinian. In De Doctrina Christiana, Bk. IV, Augustine speaks of the ideal of a direct correspondence of rhetoric and truth, of words and metaphysics. I refer to this not as an influence on the play but as an interesting and well-established parallel theory. See De Doctrina Christiana: On the Christian Doctrine, trans. J.F. Shaw, The Works of AURELIUS AUGUSTINUS, Vol 9, gen. ed. Marcus Dods (Edinburgh: T.& T. Clark, 1873).

The theatrical business of the disappearance of the Witches is an ingenious and ironic comment on the nature of Macbeth's assumptions. Clearly as he could recognize the distinction between the foulness and fairness of the day of battle immediately before the meeting with the Witches, once he has met them and come face to face with the suggestiveness of their greeting, he seems totally incapable of thinking clearly. The distinction between "foul" and "fair" in his first sentence is based on an awareness of contrasting but compatible truths--compatible in that there is no danger of confusing the one with the other. Each word in turn validly mirrors a distinct branch of knowledge. When the prophecies are voiced, the Witches' words appear to him as an attractive truth. His assumptions are no different from those voiced by Lenox and Malcolm in the preceding scene. He is of Duncan's world, and is as unprepared to contest the ontological threat to that world as were the speakers in Act I, Scene ii. It is the function of Banquo's role here to establish, by the nature of his particular intellectual sophistication, the naiveté of Macbeth as he meets the threat to his accustomed assumptions and behaviour.

The contrast between Macbeth and Banquo is a contrast between bewildered raptness and intellectual detachment. Before the Witches have even spoken to him, Banquo is given the role of speculator on the deceptiveness of appearances:

> What are these,
> So wither'd and so wild in their attire,
> That look not like th' inhabitants o' th' earth,
> And yet are on't? Live you? or are you aught
> That man may question? You seem to understand me,
> By each at once her choppy finger laying
> Upon her skinny lips: you should be women,
> And yet your beards forbid me to interpret
> That you are so.
> (ll. 39-47)

The very nature of what the eye perceives is subjected to a balanced appraisal in which the evident ("you seem"), the improbable ("that look not like") and the possible ("you should be") are each in turn weighed in the scales of the unexpected ("and yet"). Then, once the Witches have spoken, he again questions the very reality of the experience he and Macbeth have undergone, and does so, significantly, in terms of the relationship between what is known and what is said:

> Were such things here, as we do speak about,
> Or have we eaten on the insane root,
> That takes the reason prisoner?
> (ll. 83-85)

He has the intellectual preparedness to deal with the ambiguous by testing his assumptions as to the real and true in the crucible of the unaccustomed and, conversely, by evaluating the unlooked for in the light of customary truths. There is no tendency irrationally to confuse incompatible "truth," nor any enthusiastic proclivity to grasp at certainties that might seem to dispell the enigmatic. The intellectual virtue of prudence becomes the practical virtue of the morally alert man. Even when he invites the Witches to exercise their prophetic gift regarding his own future (ll. 52-61), he does so with a scepticism as to their very existence ("Are ye fantastical . . .?"), as well as to their powers ("If you can look into the seeds of time . . ."), appealing to them in the name of the absolute truth with which their presence does not seem to accord.

By contrast Macbeth seems to be obsessive and muddled rather than analytical. To the question, "Were such things here, as we do speak about . . .?" he replies, "Your children shall be kings" (l. 86). This response manifests a reliance on the Witches' words, and constitutes a veritable non-answer to the question. Such arbitrary disregard for the intellectual context out of which the response should grow parallels the Witches' disregard for the inquiries preceding their revelations, and, furthermore, reflects their technique of foiling inquiry by an appeal to the questioner's self-interest. Banquo's questions, especially the imprisoned reason image (l. 85), recall his earlier observations on Macbeth's raptness. Macbeth responds by implicitly inviting

Banquo to share that raptness, and so he ignores the rationality that would probe to the core of the experience they have shared.

This outrunning "the pauser, reason" seems naïve rather than deliberate, as it depends upon the assumption that fair-sounding words bear an intrinsic relationship to truth. Unprepared for a use of language that throws "fair" and "foul" into moral confusion, Macbeth responds with a simplicity that strives to evade that confusion. Thus, the contrast established between "fair is foul" and "foul is fair" loses focus, and Macbeth is more at one with the Witches' confusion than with Banquo's clarity. His deafness to the questions of the latter, his attention to the assertions of the former, and his adoption of the Witches' disruptive technique of dialogue underline that oneness.

Macbeth's spontaneous reaction to the startling announcements of the Weird Sisters reveals a naïve idealism that fails to differentiate between what should be and what is. His unpreparedness for "things strange" spoken upon the heath parallels the unpreparedness of his king and fellow-subjects for the strangeness of Rosse's announcements on the field of battle. The Duncan world is a Scottish Eden that has yet to discover the reality of the fall and, so, is unprepared for the guile of the forked tongue and the threat that it offers to the order and truths of that world. The wisdom of that world is the wisdom of action informed by unquestioned truths. The values and truths of that world are now close to the moment of testing, and it is the typical Macbeth rather than the atypical Banquo who is to be led to the tree of the Witches' knowledge.

The conversation between Banquo and Macbeth following the encounter with the Witches is significantly at cross-purposes--Macbeth discussing the predictions as truth, Banquo commenting on them as words[39]--when Rosse and Angus, spokesmen for Duncan, enter. Their arrival not only disrupts the dialogue but also reinforces the credulity of Macbeth and intensifies the audience's awareness of the dangerous potential of that credulity. Duncan's spokesmen, as they echo the King's praise and promise, resume the truth/words theme in Macbeth's and their own narrow terms. Messengers from a king who has acted upon assumptions identical with Macbeth's--he has heard the bleeding Captain *say* his *knowledge* and has acted accordingly--they tell of "news" in which the reality of his heroism is reliably "read" (I. iii. 89-93), of posts that, according to F_1, come "thick as Tale,"[40] to reinforce, as it were, the word-truth equation. Furthermore, they tell of a confession of "treasons capital" (l. 115) that approves earlier reports of Cawdor's treachery. Thus, the acceptance of the ideal word-knowledge relationship as actuality is shown to be characteristic of Rosse and the verbose Captain, of Malcolm and Duncan, and of Macbeth, and this common assumption now is shown to attest to the reliability of the Witches' first two predictions. To conclude that the third element in their greeting is equally reliable is an easy step for one whose assumptions about the nature of language preclude the caution revealed in Banquo's "What can the devil speak true?" (l. 107). Indeed, what follows reveals Macbeth's acceptance of the third prophecy as adequate truth and shows him constant, not to say repetitious, in his reliance thereon:

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[39] "To th' selfsame tune, and words" (l. 88) would seem to indicate that Banquo's "You shall be King" is a detached echo of the predictions geared to probing Macbeth's intentions.

> [*Aside*] Glamis, and Thane of Cawdor:
> The greatest is behind . . .
> . . . .
> [*To Banquo*] Do you not hope your children shall be kings,
> When those that gave the Thane of Cawdor to me
> Promis'd no less to them?
>
> (I. iii. 116-20)

In the "silent" rumination of the *aside* and in the words addressed to Banquo, there is no querying the questionable appearance of the speakers, and no effort to distinguish between events in the past or present and those as yet within the seeds of time; and, with respect to these last, there is no consideration of personal role or motive or responsibility in the realization of what is foretold. Words are truth; that is sufficient.

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[40] The Arden editor follows Rowe in emending the Folio reading to "thick as hail." However, Hilda Hulme attempts to justify the F_1 reading (quite successfully, I think) in "Shakespeare's Language," *Shakespeare's World*, ed. J. Sutherland and J. Hurstfield (London: Edward Arnold, 1964), p. 155, as she did in her *Explorations in Shakespeare's Language* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1962), pp. 24-26.

That the tragedy of Macbeth will not arise from naïveté or the limitations of habitual, idealized assumptions, but will arise instead, from an act of will made with a more complete awareness of what temptation involves, is implied in Banquo's educating Macbeth about the inadequacy of his response to fair-sounding words. The problems unacknowledged by Macbeth are raised by Banquo, who cautions him about limited truths that "in deepest consequence" (l. 126) betray, and who thus indicates the "foul" that may co-exist with "fair." The rational caution of Banquo, who places the problematic nature of the prophecies on the plane of morality, and who denigrates the first two proclamations of the Witches as mere "trifles," however honest (l. 125), intervenes between the rapt simplicity of Macbeth's spontaneous reaction to the Glamis-Cawdor-King greeting and the first soliloquy, in which the hero first considers the moral implications of that prophetic progression. Banquo's declaration that "the instruments of Darkness tell us truths/ . . . to betray's" (ll. 124-25) highlights clearly the problem of the relation [illegible] which is central [illegible]

[illegible]

of language to knowledge which is central to Macbeth's tragedy. It forces the hero into awareness of the deceptive powers of utterance; it qualifies his faith in the simple, ideal relation between words and the reality they reflect. Then Macbeth is left alone to ponder the moral reverberations of the prophetic greetings.

Up to this point Macbeth's response to the Witches' declarations has been, as I have suggested, static. This stasis is emphasized in the contrast between Banquo's dynamic mental pursuit of the fiendish dimensions of superficially attractive assurances and Macbeth's uncritically dangling in the web of their attractiveness. Banquo's warning, "That, trusted home,/Might yet enkindle you . . ." (ll. 120 ff.), teaches Macbeth about the ambiguous nature of language and invites him to respond to words with the ambivalence necessary for a full investigation of their potential. The soliloquy represents Macbeth's progress towards--but not to--the moral sophistication of Banquo's observations. In another sense, it might be said to be an attempt at regaining the perspective of his own opening statement, "So foul and fair a day I have not seen." That statement revealed Macbeth's awareness of the complexity of experience which contrasts with and underlines the one-dimensional quality of his response to the predictions. The analytical Macbeth of the soliloquy is not so much retreating towards a momentarily lost perspective as straining to re-interpret his earlier "fair" and "foul" categories in a new perspective of unprecendented complexity--for the perspective must not, it seems, block his view of "King hereafter" promise. This sense of straining is evident in the broken rhythms, the convoluted grammar and apparently imprecise terminology of the passage which, as L.C. Knights suggests, shows thought in the very process of formation.[41] It is in the struggle with the _good-ill_ dichotomy in this speech of self-discovery that Macbeth's "Speak, if you can:--what are you?" (l. 47) becomes, as it were, a question directed at himself. And the process of thought leads to the discovery within himself of the potential to exercise in a new and untried context--the political as opposed to the martial--the soldierly virtue that until now has reaped in honour what it has sown in blood.

This process of discovering ambivalences in the habitually unified self is revealed in Macbeth's inability to confine "good" to a definition that does not threaten the simplicity of his immediate, unambiguous response to the "king hereafter" promise:

> Two truths are told,
> As happy prologues to the swelling act
> Of the imperial theme.--
> This supernatural soliciting
> Cannot be ill; cannot be good:--

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[41] _Some Shakespearian Themes_, p. 103.

> If ill, why hath it given me earnest of success,
> Commencing in a truth? I am the Thane of Cawdor:
> If good, why do I yield to that suggestion
> Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair,
> And make my seated heart knock at my ribs,
> Against the use of nature? Present fears
> Are less than horrible imaginings.
> My thought, whose murder yet is but fantastical,
> Shakes so my single state of man,
> That function is smother'd in surmise,
> And nothing is, but what is not.
>
> (I. iii. 127-42)

The opening lines, in their myopic concentration on the logic of the progression of the prophecies, show Macbeth's propensity to preserve the stasis of his unambiguous reaction to the Witches' words. "Two truths are told" in itself becomes ironic in that the truth of Banquo's reminder about the duplicity of the instruments of darkness is ignored. Macbeth, it seems, would confine himself to the limited truths that have already become an obsession--that is to *facts*, which belong to an order of truth that is essentially unrelated to "the swelling act of the imperial theme." The word "act" in its context betrays the insufficiency of singleness of inclination: though functioning primarily within a theatrical metaphor that translates the tenor of the third prophecy into the image of *role-performing*, it implicitly introduces the problem of *the performing of deeds* and so, by an uncomic pun, invests "act" with a complexity that includes not only the notion of accomplishment but also of responsibility. Indeed, the implicit suggestiveness of "act" beyond the confines of its "all the world's a stage" metaphorical framework becomes the subject of the rest of the soliloquy.

G. Wilson Knight's assertion that this passage marks "the moment of the birth of evil in Macbeth"[42] hardly does justice to the inconclusive nature of the meditation. There is a giant step from recognition of temptation's attractiveness to the volition to commit oneself to that attractiveness—from "Why do I yield?" to "I'll do, I'll do . . . ." What is involved here is not so much birth as conception; though admittedly there is no mistaking the "shape of likelihood," the issue is as yet uncertain. Both the uncertainty and the probable outcome are evident in "Cannot be ill; cannot be good." It holds in equipoise alternatives that emphasize the moral neutrality of the prophecies. Yet this equipoise is precarious because the primary emphasis of "Cannot be ill" reflects the speaker's initial inclination to accept as good the Witches' tidings and, so, betrays a tendency to deceive that in him which might define them negatively, as Banquo has twice done, in the light of moral considerations. Thus, the expression "earnest of success" functions ironically also: "earnest" is borrowed from an announcement by Rosse[43] which corroborated Macbeth's instinctive response to the "King hereafter" idea, and its use here confirms the impression of his potential to deny his moral sense. "I am Thane of Cawdor," following hard upon "earnest" here too,[46] has a momentary finality that indicates acceptance of facts as adequate truth, as if their moral implications were non-existent. This sense of completeness (supported by the punctuation of F_1)[45] would seem to preclude examination of the notion that contrasts with "Cannot be ill." But the alternative is taken up and then the battle of ideas truly begins. The theme of the word-knowledge relationship rises in crescendo as the word "good" is tested in relation to the knowledge that emerges conceptually and, at the same time, manifests itself traumatically:

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[42] The Wheel of Fire. (1949; 4th ed. rev.; London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1960), p. 153.

[43] "And for an earnest of a greater honour,
He bade me, from him, call thee Thane of Cawdor"
(I. iii. 104-105).

> If good, why do I yield to that suggestion
> Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair,
> And makes my seated heart knock at my ribs,
> Against the use of nature?
>
> (ll. 134-37)

There is no correlation here between "good" and the dramatic experience so dramatically described.

Such a disparity is in itself a perfect opportunity for the audience to gain insight into the insufficiency of Macbeth's assumptions about language and, so, into

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[44] "If ill, why hath it given me earnest of success. . ." (I. iii. 132).

[45] The Arden edition emends the period following "Cawdor" to a colon.

the limitations of the "two truths" and the reassurances they offer him. Indeed his use of the term "suggestion" implies his recognition that the meaning of the Witches' words is potential rather than established, and that this meaning must finally be given form by his own personal decision. Should such a decision involve the continued attribution of "good" to what he terms "this supernatural soliciting" and, by extension, to the "suggestion" that grows out of it, Macbeth will have to suppress the consciousness that now attests to the unnatural ramifications of "the imperial theme."

This suppression of consciousness, if he chooses to commit himself thereto, is a suppression of every aspect of his being that runs counter to, and rejects as an "ill," the "good" proffered by what he calls "suggestion." Self-fulfilment is associated with an image in the mind which is "horrid," an image whose horror causes unwonted, disturbing reactions in the hitherto unified self. The self-fulfilment that attracts him involves a rejection of what King Henry V calls the "former self" (_II Henry IV_, V. v. 59), but whereas Henry speaks of banishing the delinquent self with an "I know thee not" finality, Macbeth's inclination is to banish, or at least suppress, the "worthy," "kind" self which is the seat of morality, responsibility, and selflessness. Self-fulfilment, according to the suggestions of what Macbeth calls "supernatural soliciting" is, therefore, self-betrayal. And there is no naïveté about his encounter with the necessity of choosing between these contrary selves--the self that recoils from the horrid image and the self that gave birth to "that suggestion." The rejection of the "kind" or ethical self would involve the silencing of an inner voice that bespeaks the equivocal character of the prophecies by opposing "good" with "horrid" and "horrible" (ll. 20-23). The probability that this voice will be silenced is suggested in "Why do I yield. . .?" The wholeness of knowledge--knowledge of evil as well as of good--is thus threatened, and the choice of a vocabulary that accords with the inclination of that self which would remove murder from the fantastical to the actual is a likelihood.

Yet no decision is arrived at. In fact, the profusion of sibilants[46] in the last five and a half lines of the soliloquy may be perceived as a sinister reflection on the fearful confusion in which Macbeth is still immersed when his meditation is interrupted by Banquo. The decision will be reached when another partner in greatness, Lady Macbeth, interrupts another such meditation. And it will be reached only when that partner teaches him a language in which "cannot be good" can have no meaning. His aptness as a student of her definitions of words, however, is revealed in this scene as an important aspect of his tragic potential. Indeed, the Macbeth who describes the new discoveries that preoccupy him as "things forgotten" (l. 151) and who, as he exits, says "Let us speak/Our free hearts each to other" (ll. 155-6) has discovered that words can be distorting mirrors of truth. In this discovery we can see an anticipatory shadow of later decision.

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[46] No fewer than 19 in the course of 50 syllables in "Present fears . . . what is not" (ll. 137-142).

A similar muted proleptic echo of commitment may be detected in Macbeth's address to Rosse and Angus, a few lines earlier:

> Kind gentlemen, your pains
> Are register'd where every day I turn
> The leaf to read them.
>
> (ll. 151-53)

Macbeth here uses the "reading"-image of Rosse's earlier lines:

> And when [the King] reads
> Thy personal venture in the rebel's fight,
> His wonder and his praises do contend,
> Which should be thine, or his.
>
> (ll. 90-93)

The borrowed word reminds us of Duncan's untainted idealistic assumptions about what words convey, and indicate how far Macbeth has already progressed towards a different kind of knowledge. In making his own the reading metaphor and exploiting its attendant ideas about discovering truth and rewarding service, Macbeth seems already to have begun playing a royal role. This gives to "let us towards the King" (l. 153) disconcerting undertones, because the phrase has anticipatory rumblings of a catastrophic decision about the Witches' third prophecy.

Macbeth's desire for kingship and his desire to remain true to his moral nature remain in unresolved tension in Act I, Scene iii. This is especially evident in his wish that chance might relieve him of his disturbing dilemma. But his desire is a vain one. He whose virtue made him independent of Fortune wishes to depend on Chance now. But chance and fortune are so closely related that this vain wish suggests a weakening of his moral fibre. Patch has shown that the association of Fortune and Chance persisted from the imperial era of Rome through the patristic, Medieval and Renaissance periods.[47] The persistence of this theme in European thought enables us to discover in Macbeth's "If Chance will have me King, why, Chance may crown me,/ Without my stir" (ll. 144-45) and "Think upon what hath chanc'd" (l. 154) a resumption of the Fortune-Virtue theme which had been introduced by the Captain in Act I, Scene ii. We may also see this as a transition to the resumption of the same theme in Act I, Scene iv., where the chance announcement of Malcolm's designation as heir to the throne forces upon Macbeth the recognition of the inescapability of choice. The traditional dissociation of chance or fortune from virtue allies Macbeth's wish for an accidental solution of his dilemma with the wish to evade moral responsibility. Macbeth's own words suggest that passivity may provide the means of evasion. But Shakespeare's organization of events precludes such evasion as if to show that chance and choice are not mutually exclusive.[48]

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[47] The Goddess Fortuna in Medieval Literature (1927; rpt. London: Frank Cass, 1967), pp. 12-24.

Shakespeare's technique is to allow chance to present an impediment that is quite contrary of Macbeth's desire, an impediment which Macbeth must choose to "o'er leap" (thus attaching himself to Fortune) or to accept as an absolute let to desire (thus allying himself with Virtue, loyalty). The intrusion of such a chance element adds weight to the contrasting goods and ills that, in Macbeth's own words, the interim must weigh (I. iii. 155).

The chance element that forces upon Macbeth the necessity of decision-making and, therefore, moral responsibility is prepared for in the account of the death of defeated Cawdor, which opens Act I, Scene iv, focuses our attention on the nature and consequences of choice for one who has striven against the order of the Duncan world. Cawdor has died affirming the values of that world, the very values which Macbeth in the interim between temptation and decision must evaluate. The process of evaluation is dramatized in the contrast between the public statements of all speakers and the private deliberations of Macbeth's brief soliloquy:

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[48] In Renaissance thought there is a consistent tradition which suggests that since Chance is subject to Divine Providence it allows for free will. This idea pervades early Medieval as well as late Renaissance Christian thought. See for example Boethius, The Consolation of Philosophy V. i. (published with the English Translation of "I.T." (1609), revised by H.F. Stewart [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1918]), pp. 367-69, and John Milton, The Art of Logic, trans. Allan H. Gilbert, The Works of John Milton, Vol. XI (New York: Columbia University Press, 1935),

> The Prince of Cumberland!--That is a step
> On which I must fall down, or else o'erleap,
> For in my way it lies. Stars, hide your fires!
> Let not light see my black and deep desires;
> The eye wink at the hand; yet let that be,
> Which the eye fears, when it is done, to see.
>
> (I. iv. 48-53)

The clash-of-values theme is appropriately reintroduced by Duncan's comment on deceptive appearances: "There's no art/ To find the mind's construction in the face" (ll. 11-12). Then in the King's courteous encomium to Macbeth and in

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pp. 46-47. See also Milton, *The Christian Doctrine*, I, 21, trans. C.R. Sumner, *The Works*, Vol. XV (1933), p. 27, where he states that "those who attribute the creation of every thing to nature must necessarily associate chance with nature as a joint divinity . . . in the place of one God, whom they cannot tolerate." Milton elsewhere sees that the power weaker men attribute to fortune or chance is really their ruse for refusing to recognize their own weakness of will and slackness of discipline. See *The Reason of Church Government*, ed. H.M. Ayres, *The Works*, Vol. III, Pr. I, pp. 184-85.

Macbeth's equally courteous reply, the planting-growth-harvest-banquet imagery (ll. 28-33) symbolically restates the concept of Nature's ideal order and reaffirms the humanistic values based on that ideal. Macbeth's own words in reply to magnanimous Duncan's "worthiest cousin" address, however insincere they may be, define in their stress on "service," "loyalty," "duties" and "honour" (ll. 22-27) the terms of that order that makes ambition virtue. The phrase, "the rest is labour" (l. 44), coupled with the earlier idea of loyalty as its own reward (ll. 22-23) brings into focus the absolutist view of the values in question. The threat to these values lies in the ambition that would o'erleap these exalted considerations so that the "two truths" of the temptation scene may prove trustworthy prologues to the drama of fulfilled desire. The tendency of the ambitious mind to overcome service, loyalty, and duty makes equivocal Macbeth's final public utterance: "I'll . . . make joyful/The hearing of my wife with your approach" (ll. 44-45). The cost of releasing warrior valour from loyalty--and this is what the ambition demands--is recognized, though not analyzed in the soliloquy:

> The Prince of Cumberland!--That is a step
> On which I must fall down, or else o'erleap
> For in my way it lies. Stars, hide your fires!
> Let not light see my black and deep desires;
> The eye wink at the hand; yet let that be
> Which the eye fears, when it is done, to see.
>
> (ll. 48-53)

The nature of choice, and of decision, is scrutinized. The choice is between failure to satisfy ambition and defiance of the possibility of failure. The decision to defy threatening failure involves a succumbing to immorality and a cultivating of hypocritical guile. Nevertheless, "yet let that be/Which the eye fears, when it is done, to see" is a statement of desire rather than of commitment. More significant still, Macbeth's recognition of the nature of that act whose name he does not utter[49] is couched in the language of the absolutists, not of the relativistic equivocators: the stars, symbols of transcendent values, must hide their fires (l. 50); his desires wear the livery of evil; his single state of man will be rent, for eye must wink at hand; and the eye, the window of the soul, will fear to look on "that . . . Which . . . when it is done" is unequivocally evil. Thus, the Macbeth of the early scenes is shown in positive relation to the norms of values in the Duncan society; his rejection of those values, even at this advanced stage of temptation, is a potentiality, not an actuality.

The relationship between potentiality and actuality is again focused on in the following scene, Act I, Scene v, where the analysis of Macbeth's values and virtues takes the form of characterization by opinion, as it did in Act I, Scene ii. Here the opinion is that of Lady Macbeth. In both her private musings and her protestations, later, to her husband, Shakespeare establishes a carefully-effected antithesis to the naïve optimism and idealistic absolutism of the royal party in the first panel of the triptych portrayal. The effect is one of balance--the balance of extremes--which highlights the terms of choice confronted by Macbeth in the centrepiece of the triptych, Scenes iii and iv. Whereas in Act I, Scene ii the potential for Macbeth's releasing valour from the bonds of allegiance is introduced ironically, as earlier demonstrated, and whereas in Act I, Scene iii especially, that potential is dramatized in Macbeth's rapt reaction to the promise inherent in the words of the Weird Sisters, now in Scene v that problem is removed at once from the level of ironic unawareness and of shocked surprise to be confronted as logical necessity. As Lady Macbeth sees it, the gulf between the potential and the actual is to be bridged not by the fortuitous co-operation of chance but by an act of will, not by desire but by performance. Such bridging, as she sees it, is to be engineered by eschewing moral considerations (such as those in Macbeth's ponderings in Act I, Scene iii) which make the act of will a dilemma. In fine, the resumption of the potential-actual problem as the centre of consideration in Act I, Scene v, is attended by the reintroduction of themes which in the earlier scenes define the nature of the problem, but those themes are now so treated as to give Lady Macbeth the role of re-definer of words, of ethics, and of reality--as to make her the symbol, in fact, of one pole of choice for the tempted protagonist.

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[49] See Hulme, Explorations, p. 23 on Macbeth's use of "hooded language" to refer to what he dares not name. Jorgensen also discusses the significance of this phenomenon, which he terms "improper naming," in Chapter III of Our Naked Frailties and in "Shakespeare's Dark Vocabulary," The Drama of the Renaissance: Essays for Leicester Bradner, ed. Elmer Blistein (Providence, R.I.: Brown University Press, 1970), pp. 108-122.

The letter read by Lady Macbeth at the beginning of Act I, Scene v, serves as a link with the earlier segments of the tripartite "character" of the hero. The contrast between the letter's vague allusiveness and the heroine's subsequent insistence on the need for uncompromising choice functions as a spotlight on the void between desire and commitment on Macbeth's part. The effect of this is not only to complete the design that centres our attention on the hero's deliberations on the heath by surrounding the temptation scenes (Act I, Scenes iii-iv) with a king-ethic/wife-ethic contrast but also to establish a pattern of inexorable progression towards the climax of decision-making that completes the first movement of the play in the final scene of Act I.

The first sentences of the letter read by Lady Macbeth provide strong links with earlier scenes; and thus provide us with a sense of dramatic design which emphasizes the role of Macbeth's decision-making as the most vital element in the play's first movement:

> They met me in the day of success; and I have
> learn'd by the perfect'st report, they have more
> in them than mortal knowledge.
> (ll. 1-3)

"Success" here recalls to the audience the praise of Macbeth's exploits in Act I, Scene ii., when "success" was the triumph of "virtue . . . with valour arm'd." In "more than mortal knowledge" we may find ironic echoes of the guile of the Weird Sisters and of their juxtaposing the hero's name with mention of a pilot wrecked on his homeward journey.[50] Perhaps, to quote Frederick Turner, Macbeth "has confused the intoxication of knowing something of the future with the power of timeless wisdom."[51] But the strongest effect of the phrase lies in its failure to reflect Macbeth's ambivalent response ("Cannot be ill; cannot be good," [I. iii. 131]) to the suggestions implicit in the prophecies. There is no echo here of "horrible imaginings," no direct hint of

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[50] In "His Fiend-like Queen" (*Shakespeare Quarterly*, 19 (1966), 75-81), W.M. Merchant draws attention to the "human"/"death-dealing" pun in "mortal knowledge," which he sees as anticipating the "mortal thought" of Lady Macbeth's soliloquy (p. 76). He is clearly correct about the anticipatory function of the pun, but its primary effect would seem to be retrospective, thus reinforcing the sense of the suppressing in the letter of all intimations of moral turbulence.

[51] *Shakespeare and the Nature of Time* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1971), p. 130.

"black and deep desires," no reference to Banquo or his warnings about diabolical truth-telling. The willingness to interpret the "prophetic greetings" as fair truth without having to wrestle with "if good . . ." considerations still prevails. Self-questioning is hidden beneath the reassurance proffered in "I have learn'd by the perfect'st report." This form of deception may be seen as a retreat from the moral wrestling of the first soliloquy. The climax of such a suppression of the awareness of ambivalence is the expression "perfect'st report." Though Kenneth Muir, following Dr. Johnson, interprets this as referring to Macbeth's extra-textual inquiries about the Witches,[52] such speculation would seem unnecessary: the passage itself provides a clear clue to the meaning of the phrase. In the context of the letter as a whole, "perfect'st report" has an appositional relationship to the later sentence in which Rosse's announcements in Act I, Scene iii are offered as corroborative evidence of the reliability of the predictions:

> Whiles I stood rapt in the wonder of it, came missives from the King, who all-hailed me, "Thane of Cawdor"; by which title, before, the Weird Sisters saluted me, and referr'd me to the coming on of time, with "Hail, King that shalt be!"
>
> (ll. 61-10)

Thus, the first lines of the letter mirror the starting-point of Macbeth's journey into the realms of ambivalence, but show a preference for his "if ill . . ." type of cogitation, and reflect his attraction to the potential issue of "horrible imaginings" elicited by words of provocatively imperfect speakers. That same tendency is revealed again in the unequivocal appeal of:

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[52] See the Arden Shakespeare edition, p. 27, where Muir approves as "clearly right" Johnson's explanation.

> This have I thought good to deliver thee (my dearest partner of greatness) that thou might'st not lose the dues of rejoicing, by being ignorant of what greatness is promis'd thee. Lay it to thy heart, and farewell.
>
> (ll. 10-14)

Here "good" is deprived of all disquieting associations with the "horrid image" of an unnatural act (I. iii. 134-36) and "greatness" is dissociated from any overt hint of "murder," whether "fantastical" (I. iii. 139) or "done" (I. iv. 53). But while greatness lies in the seeds of time, and while the emphasis is placed on promise rather than intention, "good" has not yet been equivocated out of all moral definition, and "greatness" is still not incompatible with the virtue of "valour's minion."

The displacement of terms that would enable "good" to associate itself with "horrid image" and "greatness" to withstand its associations with "horrid deed" is concomitant with the decision, rather than the desire, to realize the greatness in question. Such displacement is demonstrated in Lady Macbeth's wrenching the "Lay it to thy heart" salutation (l. 14) into the sinister invocation, "Come to my woman's breasts/And take my milk for gall, you murth'ring ministers"

(ll. 47-48). She lays prophetic greetings to her bosom with willed violence to her nature and, thus, is ready to teach as "good" what Macbeth's seated heart knocking at his ribs recoiled from as "ill." Her role is that of maniacal midwife, easing into reality the self encountered by Macbeth on the blasted heath and, so enabling him savagely to rip promise from the womb of time.

Lady Macbeth's response to the epistle from Macbeth establishes her as an impressive antithesis to the humanism of the Duncan world and to the ethical self in Macbeth which corresponds to that world. The ethical self, which judged that the Witches' third solicitation "cannot be good," is associated with a complex of attitudes that give moral imperatives primacy over advantages available only at the risk of violating conscience, that demands an accord between word and truth and between principle and behaviour--an accord implicit in the Ciceronian ideal that the good orator must first be a good man. It includes the view that all things should be judged on the grounds that "nothing is truly 'bad' unless joined to base infamy" and nothing "truly 'good' unless associated with moral integrity."[53] Macbeth's letter indicates his inclination to release himself from such a humanistic view of the good. Lady Macbeth reads well between the lines, detects inclination for what it is, recognizes the distance between desire and decision, berates her husband for lack of policy (that is, Machiavellian fox-guile) and calls him a coward. She "fears" his nature: those very virtues which make him humane are to her vices. He is as she sees it, "too full o' th' milk of human kindness" to have the naturalistic ruthlessness necessary for an unflinching pursuit of greatness. In her fear of virtue as impediment to egoistical desire and in the perverse Aristotelianism of her discovery that being "too full" of humanitas is vicious, she establishes herself as a principle of Machiavelism--a principle but dimly shadowed in Macbeth's own inclination towards expediency.

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[53] Erasmus, The Education of a Christian Prince, p. 148.

When Macbeth has joined her, she reinforces our sense of her Machiavellian role by uttering maxims that have a characteristic Prince-ly tone:[54]

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[54] "To beguile the time . . ." is a maxim that might possibly be informed by Machiavelli's answer to Fortune's whims: "I also believe that he is happy whose mode of procedure accords with the needs of the times, and similarly he is unfortunate whose mode of procedure is opposed to the times," (The Prince, XXV, p. 92). "Look like the innocent flower. . ." comes perhaps from emblem literature, but what is evil in Whitney, for example, is useful in the Machiavellian order of values. Orsini in his "'Policy' or the Language of Elizabethan Machiavellianism" (See Chapter I, note 30) offers "maxim" as a major technical term. Sir Walter Raleigh 's Maxims of State derives much of its materials from The Prince (See Felix Raab, The English Face of Machiavelli [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964], pp. 70-71). Drayton's couplet, "In ev'rything I hold this maxim still,/The circumstanse doth make it good or ill" (Idea, 391 [1594]) nicely associates the word with the type of relativism characteristic of Lady Macbeth. It is not surprising that anti-Jesuit pamphlets should use the key word

> To beguile the time
> Look like the time; . . . .
> . . . . .Look like th' innocent flower,
> But be the serpent under't.
> (I. v. 62-65)

In her words and in her whole bearing she reveals an attachment to a naturalistic mode of thought that makes the criterion of effectiveness a new commandment. Furthermore, her attachment to greatness as the *summum bonum* is linked to a concept of virtue that rejects explicitly the traditional Christian idea of virtue. She desires Macbeth not only to have insight into occasion but also the purposefulness to realize the potential in occasion. Such insight and purposefulness are the essentials of the Machiavellian concept of heroic *virtù* as discussed in the sixth and eighth chapters of *The Prince*. In the words of Professor J. Plamenatz, "One of the meanings that Machiavelli gives to *virtù* is the

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"maxim" in connection with the society of equivocation. William Watson, in his preface to Baashaw's pamphlet *A Sparing Discoverie of our English Iesuits* (1601) claimed that he could "deduct a triple alphabet intire of Machivilian practises used by our Iesuits . . .how, when, amongst whom, and by whom, this & that strattageme is to be practised: what maxims, axiomes, or rules are generall or common to all: and which are speciall," see Kaula, *The Archpriest Controversy*, p. 37. There has been as yet no study of the Machiavellian maxim, to my knowledge.

capacity to form large and difficult purposes, and to act resolutely in pursuit of them. Virtù, in this (the heroic) sense, is imagination and resilience as well as courage and intelligence."[55] Such virtue lies not in moral behaviour, nor in the observance of the will of God, but rather in combining intelligence and fortitude in order to realize a Hotspurian dream of fame--to interpret honour as success. Though for Machiavelli virtù is not necessarily incompatible with moral concerns.[56] Lady Macbeth, answering the demands of the particular circumstances in which her ambitious husband finds himself, recognizes the antipathy between his expediential "good" and the "good" that defines itself in contrast to traditional doctrines of Hell and Nature. The "virtue" she admires is heroic, and she sets about asserting its validity by disregarding the Christian and Christian-humanist interpretation of the word.

Basic to Lady Macbeth's concept of virtù is the opnion that purposeful action undertaken in order to realize individual desire enables a man to determine his own existence. The re-creative force of will and the self-sufficiency of that force is the theme of the passage in which she analyzes Macbeth's defects of *virtù*, defects which she clearly recognizes as the limitations of orthodox virtue. And she shows this recognition by using the language of traditional moral values to attack the defects in question. But, in doing so, she uses traditional terminology to attack orthodox morality and to clarify an ethic antithetical to that morality. She sees that Machiavellian guile, the "illness" that should attend ambition, is an expedient and necessary "good." She contrasts "thou wouldst highly"--in which "wouldst" relates to desire--with "thou wouldst holily"--in which "wouldst" relates to the act of willing and unequivocally considers it necessary that will should attach itself to high ambition rather than holy living; hence what is implied in "wouldst wrongly win" is a desire which, ideally for her, must become a decision:

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[55] "In Search of Machiavellian Virtù." in Parel, The Political Calculus, pp. 164-65.

[56] Bakeless remarks that Machiavelli "did not necessarily oppose the special conception of power which he called virtù to ordinary moral virtue" (Christopher Marlowe, p. 183), and Plamenatz, in making the same point refers to Machiavelli's admiration for what "[Savonarola] had of virtù--courage, a strong will, and fortitude--," The Political Calculus, p. 177.

> Glamis thou art, and Cawdor; and shalt be
> What thou art promis'd.--Yet I do fear thy nature:
> It is too full o' th' milk of human kindness,
> To catch the nearest way. Thou wouldst be great;
> Art not without ambition, but without
> The illness should attend it: what thou wouldst highly,
> That wouldst thou holily; wouldst not play false,
> And yet wouldst wrongly win; thou'dst have, great Glamis,
> That which cries, "Thus thou must do," if you have it;
> And that which rather thou dost fear to do,
> Than wishest should be undone. Hie thee hither,
> That I may pour my spirits in thine ear,
> And chastise with the valour of my tongue
> All that impedes thee from the golden round,
> Which fate and metaphysical aid doth seem
> To have thee crown'd withal.
>
> (ll. 15-30)

The gap between the latent and the actualized revealed in the "greatness . . . promised" (ll. 13-14) in Macbeth's letter provides Lady Macbeth with her obsessive theme of will, introduced in "shalt be/What thou art promis'd" (emphasis added). And the bridging of that gap, the one concern of the passage, is identified with a distrust of that "kindness" which might be described as a "foul fair" in terms of the "fair foul" reversal underlying "Thou art kind" of the First Witch (I. iii. 12).

The fair-foul reversal which Lady Macbeth recognizes as essential to the will of greatness is demonstrated in the contrast between the "milk of human kindness" image and "pour my spirits in thine ear." The "milk" image is invested with derogatory connotations of effeminacy and deprived of its associations with nourishment and, indeed, nurture; such a use of the metaphor implies a rejection of nature's order and an adoption of barbarism. The latter conceit, despite its association with poison (or because of it) becomes the epitome in its context of the prime virtue sanctioned by the time-bound "theology" of necessity. Lady Macbeth's values have an ironically appropriate similarity to those of the females who "look not like th' inhabitants o' th' earth" (I. iii. 41) and who suggest in their appearance more of the (bearded!) manliness here advocated than of the milk of femininity. Her espousal of those values contrasts with the naïve unawareness of the Duncan party and with the prudent caution of Banquo. Her Machiavelism has, by contrast to the assumptions and protestations of those spokesmen of orthodox morality, the defect of trying to obliterate all that is timeless in human nature, but that defect is her virtuous antidote to the limitations of Macbeth's virtù. And since she wills the timeless to have no influence on her thoughts about Macbeth's attaining the golden round, she can rely on the valour of a tongue that can forge the new language relevant to the fulfillment of promise--the "wierd" language whose strangeness she wilfully associated with the unsexing of her femininity and the poisoning of her mind,[57] and which we detect in her peculiar metaphorical idiom.

In this way, as in Edmund's "nature" soliloquy in King Lear, (I. ii. 1-22), Shakespeare passes adverse judgment on what we may call Hobbesian relativism. The same clash is dramatized directly in Troilus and Cressida when Troilus, disagreeing with Helenus and Hector, the advocates of reason, argues for action that accords with his own concepts of honour and manhood, and takes the position of the relativist with the question, "What's aught but as 'tis valued?" Hector presents the answer of the absolutist:

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[57] Merchant shows that in "take my milk for gall," "take" means "taint with disease" ["His Fiendlike Queen", Shakespeare Survey, 19 (1966), 76] Cf. C.T. Onions, A Shakespeare Glossary (1911), 2nd ed., rev. (rpt. Oxford: Clarendon Press, [1963]), p. 219, def. #2.

> . . . Value dwells not in particular will;
> It holds his estimate and dignity
> As well wherein 'tis precious of itself
> As in the prizer . . . .
> . . . .
> And the will dotes that is attributive
> To what infectiously itself affects,
> Without some image of th' affected merit.
>
> (*Troilus and Cressida*, II. ii. 53-60)

This reply may be said to express in its context what is ironically affirmed in *Macbeth* by the unacceptability of Lady Macbeth's warped metaphors. How well Lady Macbeth grasps, intellectually at least, the idea of the infectious quality of the doting will is evident in her counterpointing of high and holy (ll. 20-21) and in her choice of "illness" as the term describing the quality of decisiveness she expects from the truly ambitious will. How well she asserts a relativistic answer to a question such as "What's aught but as tis valued?" is clear in the linguistic relativism of her use of the word "fear." In her first utterance of the word ("Yet do I fear thy nature") "fear" is synonymous with "distrust"; it is thus related to the psychological uncertainty experienced in the face of mutually exclusive possibilities; hence, we see its possible relevance to Macbeth's contemplation of the morality of antithetical modes of action. Yet, when she utters the word a second time, applying it to his mind rather than to her own ("that which . . . thou dost fear to do" [l. 24]) she merely equates it with "cowardice." The emphasis is totally amoral, as her subsequent statement shows. The possibility that the "fear" in question may be metaphysical speculation or the interference of conscience is obliterated, and the univocal dimensions of the word's meaning are underlined by her phrase "chastise with the valour of my tongue" (l. 27)--the image representing her cure for his pusillanimity. When we recognize "All that impedes thee from the golden round" (l. 28) as synonymous with "fear," we see that for her the value of particular will is paramount. The distinction between objective merit and what Hector calls "affected merit" disappears: whatever belongs to the realm of the absolute is, for her, irrelevant. Meaning in language by a fiat of will also becomes arbitrary: the disparity between "good" and "ill" disappears when Lady Macbeth asserts as solely valid her interpretation of "fear" and denies the possibility of any other significance in that word.

The adherence to will as an elected absolute of the relativist mind is demonstrated in Lady Macbeth's alternate weighing, in the syntactic balance of each sentence, of greatness and impediments to greatness. This is notable especially in the progressive changes in tone of her successive uses of "wouldst" in the soliloquy. She gives the word, variously, positive, negative and neutral connotations, for that word in turn bears a relationship to the approved (hence, positive) "Thus thou must do" (l. 22) to the neutral (but potentially positive) "than wishest . . . undone" (l. 25) or to "fear to do" (l. 24) the translation into the terminology of commitment of "nature" and "milk of human kindness" (and is, therefore, negative). In "thou wouldst be great" (l. 18) "wouldst" refers to Macbeth's attachment to promise and is synonymous with "desirest" or "wishest"; it has an aura of neutrality about it because of the positive emphasis on "illness" (l. 20) which gives the act-of-will a higher value than the not-negative, not-wholly-positive status of "ambition" (l. 19) with which it is associated. Already, the three possible meanings of "wouldst" (in descending order: act of will, will to act, and unwillingness to act, or the passivity induced by moral considerations) capture the tensions of the potential-realized dilemma and imply a chosen solution. The "illness" that attends ambition, relativistic "good," is unfavourably juxtaposed with the illness nourished by the milk of human kindness, an absolutistic "good." The superiority of the former over the latter informs the uses of "wouldst" in the succeeding thought: "What thou wouldst highly,/That wouldst thou holily" (ll. 20-21). Here "wouldst highly" is positive, an affirmation of the will to act, and is balanced with a negative "wouldst" informed by the effeminacy-morality equation. The same polarities are reflected in the reversed balance of "wouldst not play false,/And yet wouldst wrongly win" (ll. 21-22), where the tone of approval wrecks the value basis of the words "false" and "wrongly" as it did earlier in the case of "illness."

Lady Macbeth's employment of the terminology of traditional ethical evaluation is counteracted by the thrust of her intention, so that the terminology is shown to be irrelevant and, therefore, meaningless. Thus, the argument for her soliloquy leads towards a simplifying of the tensions already mentioned and, further, towards the problem-solving confidence of the climactic "Hie thee hither" (l. 25) with:

> thou [woul]dst have, great Glamis,
> That which cries, "Thus thou must do," if thou have it;
> And that which rather thou dost fear to do,
> Than wishest should be undone.
>
> (ll. 22-25)

Here the positive tendencies of the neutral are identified in terms, first, of the heroic ("thou'dst have") and, then, of the pusillanimous ("Thou wishest") possibilities of desire; but the need for positive commitment leads to the denigration of neutral as negative: the unrealized will-to-act is simply identified with "fear"; "thou wouldst" must give way to "I will," or be termed cowardice.

In her first soliloquy Lady Macbeth develops the theme of greatness introduced in Macbeth's letter and follows the logic of its implications for her until she utters her own "I will" in a poison image ("pour my spirits in thine ear") which paradoxically expresses her rejection of traditional concepts of the good and the healthful and which unequivocally epitomizes her concept of virtù. The relationship between that virtù and the inversion of norms is again emphasized in the climax of her first speech:

> . . . And chastise with the valour of my tongue
> All that impedes thee from the golden round,
> Which fate and metaphysical aid doth seem
> To have thee crown'd withal.
>
> (ll. 27-30;emphasis added)

The word "valour" is associated with greatness, the fulfilment of ambition, and so connotes an idea of worthiness that is a perversion of the concept of worth held by the royal party in Act I, Scenes ii and iv where "worthy" is not dissociated from service, loyalty and duty.[58] That this is the case is demonstrated by the use of "chastise" to denote the disciplining of moral considerations--indeed their subjugation by that conqueror, the valiant tongue. Nature, values, and language are all moulded anew, just as, as she knows, her husband's desire must be remoulded into determination.

But while Lady Macbeth's soliloquy helps define the nature of the Machiavelism Macbeth is later to adopt in his quest for greatness, the entrance of the Messenger at the end of the soliloquy helps reveal the frailty of Lady Macbeth's purposefulness and, indeed, the very insufficiency of the Machiavellian ethic itself. Lady Macbeth's solving of moral tensions by her wilful wrenching of nature and terminology into the unambiguous forms demanded by the individual will as summum bonum is ironically undercut at the end of her soliloquy by the arrival of her husband's messenger, just as by the sleep-walking scene in Act V it will have been undercut by the unattended complexity of that very nature she is determined to simplify. When the messenger announces, "The King comes here tonight," Lady Macbeth is startled ("Thou 'rt mad to say it." [l. 31]) as if disconcerted by the very ambiguity of the word "king" itself. That for her the word seems to apply to Macbeth, the subject of her concerns with greatness and the "golden round," as Walker postulates,[59] is likely, because her recovery ("Is not my master with him? who were't so,/Would have inform'd for preparation" [ll. 32-33]) depends upon an emphasis that is geared to dissociating "master" from "king." That "King" becomes equivocal in this way is an ironic prelude to the failure of her Machiavellian leanings, already closely bound up with the linguistic virtuosity of the univocal.

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[58] See I. iv. 22-27 where Macbeth's speech is a virtual interpretation of the term "worthiest cousin."

Already Shakespeare seems to have identified ironically the failure of Machiavellianism, the impossibility of dismissing the ethical, metaphysical and religious from human affairs: the cost of attaining to the "golden round" will involve inevitably the undesired but inevitable awareness of all that is significant by Duncan's "golden blood."[60] The play will show that "all that impedes [Macbeth] from the golden round" constitutes an "all" which cannot be dismissed as "fear" _qua_ cowardice. Rather, an important part of the tragic discovery will be that "fear" is those forces rather than they it. In other words, the term is properly governed by the reality rather than governing it, so that the grammar of will as instituted by Lady Macbeth is not valid, and therefore means nothing. Perhaps it is something of this kind that Professor Ellis-Fermor has in mind when she says that "Shakespeare carried forward from his exploration [of the genesis of the Machiavel] certain fundamental conclusions about the nature of . . . that perversion of individualism which is villainy."[61] One conclusion of _Macbeth_ is the inevitability of the villain's discovery that will cannot but fail to conquer the other faculties of the soul.

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[59] Roy Walker, The Time is Free (London: Andrew Dakers Ltd., 1949), p. 46.

The conclusion that the will cannot succeed in conquering the soul's other faculties depends upon the testing in experience of the hero's decision to emancipate his will from the dictates of conscience. Macbeth's struggle throughout the first three Acts is foreshadowed in Lady Macbeth's interrupted soliloquy. How he will strive to remain faithful to the dictates of the will to regicide is intimated (though the reader or playgoer can only recognize this retrospectively) in the manner of Lady Macbeth's recovery from her surprise encounter with the ambiguity of the word "King." She struggles to overcome her ambivalent response to the Messenger's announcement as soon as he leaves the stage, and tries to regain her uncomplicated singleness of purpose:

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[60] For a discussion of the significance of "golden blood," see W.A. Murray, "Why Was Duncan's Blood Golden?" _Shakespeare Survey_, 19 (1966), 34-43.

[61] _The Jacobean Drama_, p. 254.

> Come, you Spirits
> That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,
> And fill me, from the crown to the toe, top-full
> Of direst cruelty! make thick my blood,
> Stop up th' access and passage to remorse;
> That no compunctious visitings of Nature
> Shake my fell purpose, nor keep peace between
> Th' effect and it! Come to my woman's breasts,
> And take my milk for gall, you murth'ring ministers,
> Wherever in your sightless substances
> You wait on Nature's mischief! Come, thick Night,
> And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of Hell,
> That my keen knife see not the wound it makes,
> Nor Heaven peep through the blanket of the dark,
> To cry, "Hold, hold!"
>
> (ll. 40-54)

But this passage, especially in the sense of desperation conveyed in the triple iteration of the imperative "Come," suggests an intuitive awareness on Lady Macbeth's part of the possibilities of failure, and illustrates the negative response to that awareness. Similarly, the pleonastic intensity of "fill me, from the crown to the toe, top-full/

Of direst cruelty" (a plea for quantitative plenitude as a defence against the presence of any drop of the quality of mercy) reveals a fear of failure, a dread of the effects of the milk of human kindness. Furthermore, in the earlier part of the soliloquy (ll. 15-30), and to a lesser extent here, Lady Macbeth seems singularly incapable of referring directly, even in the privacy of her own thoughts, to the regicide she contemplates. Her tongue, for all its self-attributed valour, has failed to name that which seems less disturbingly spoken of when referred to evasively. Shakespeare's original audience, who saw names or nouns as a bodying forth of the reality to which they refer, would have understood the significance of Lady Macbeth's evasions more easily than can a modern audience. That audience would have seen in Lady Macbeth's evasive terminology a suggestion of her unwillingness to confront the reality bodied forth in the noun.[62]

Lady Macbeth has referred to regicide in such terms as "the nearest way" (l. 18), as "That which cries, 'Thus must thou do,' if thou have it" (l. 23), as "that which thou dost fear to do" (l. 24) and, in the second part of the soliloquy, she calls it "the wound [her keen knife] makes" (l. 52). The closest she comes to a direct naming of the crime is her use of the phrase "you murth'ring ministers," a phrase which is at one remove only from "murther" or "regicide". Her use of linguistic evasion has the function, as Mahood has taught us to discover, of revealing that the will to become dehumanized (or unsexed) is bound to be frustrated: Lady Macbeth's refusal, or incapacity, to name the deed suggests that her rejection of moral awareness is not complete and, indeed, may be impossible. Lady Macbeth's success in uttering the word "murth'ring" may be interpreted as a wilful effort to overcome the implications of the "hooded language" or "improper naming"[63] that characterizes her use of expressions such as "the nearest way." If so, it serves but to indicate her general failure to face the reality of the crime, because, when Macbeth enters, her proclivity for linguistic evasion is all the more remarkable. Whatever the intended ironies of "He that's coming/Must be provided for" (ll. 65-66), she still has failed to utter the word "murther." Hence her profession of readiness for what she calls "This night's great business" (l. 67), because she is still referring euphemistically to the horrid deed, rings hollow and allows for our witnessing her further surprises in discovering the hidden (and avoided) aspects of things.

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[62] See Molly Mahood, Shakespeare's Wordplay (London: Methuen and Co. Ltd., 1957), pp. 167ff.

The function of evasive terminology as a form of euphemism is to reveal that, in the case of Lady Macbeth, though she is capable of uttering an invocation which expresses the will to "pour the sweet milk of concord into Hell" (IV. iii. 98) and to reject all that is bright, regenerative and protective in macrocosmic and microcosmic Nature, she is not likely to achieve the condition desired: reality, like language, is more persuasive than the will to evade its truths. The condition Lady Macbeth desires is one of sterility, and that condition is threatened by the life-fostering, compunctious--the humane--elements in Nature which the valiant tongue may fail to chastise.

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[63] Hilda Hulme refers to linguistic evasion as "hooded language" in *Explorations*, pp. 23ff. Paul A. Jorgensen calls it "improper naming" in his essay "Shakespeare's Dark Vocabulary," pp. 108ff.

The presence, in Lady Macbeth's soliloquy, of evasive terminology as a form of euphemism leads the audience, ideally, to distinguish the limitations and deficiencies of Will. The direction of Will is another matter--indeed, the main one at this point--and the seeming success of Lady Macbeth's efforts to become, as it were, a Goneril is fundamental to the exploration throughout the rest of the play--and not alone in Lady Macbeth's case--of the profound depths of inner life that cannot be ignored and cannot be willed out of being. The delicate ironic function of euphemism adds increased weight to the strong language of decision in the "Come, you Spirits" passage, which appropriately knits into the fabric of intention some of the most colourful threads of imagery from earlier scenes. "Take my milk for gall" is one such thread that is of the same skein as "milk of human kindness;" in "thick Night [palled in] the dunnest smoke of Hell" there is a thread of "fog and filthy air;" and "sightless substances" is a re-working of the eye-wink-at-the-hand theme. Thus, the speech becomes the epitome of all that Macbeth confronted when he first encountered what was a yet "fantastical" murder (I. iii. 134-40). Lady Macbeth and the Witches and the promptings harnessed to the predictions all combine into a coherent symbol: they become a composite principle of conduct[64] that Macbeth must choose to adopt or reject when the moment of choice arrives.

The attractiveness of that principle and, at the same time, Macbeth's non-commitment thereto are attested to by both the structure and content of the closing movement of the scene, which begins with Macbeth's entrance. The quality of intimate sharing that characterizes the conversation is subordinated to the sense of imbalanced dialectic effected through Lady Macbeth's dominance. Structurally, Macbeth's few inconclusive half-lines are overwhelmed by the relentless rhetoric of his partner, who uses their customary oneness of understanding in order to achieve a oneness of determination. If we examine the content of the dialogue, we note that Lady Macbeth's forceful attempt to silence the Hamlet in her husband manifests itself at first indirectly, in that she attributes to him a oneness with her own leanings. Secondly, her attempt manifests itself directly, for she exhorts Macbeth to give actuality to the "strange matters" she reads on his countenance. Thirdly, it manifests itself in the indirect-direction of her closing lines, where the invitation to decision is coupled with the veiled accusation of cowardice.

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[64] To change the sense of Banquo's expression, they are an instrument of darkness (I. iii. 24) that may or may not be put to use. In Shakespeare and the Nature of Time, Turner has this to say: "Macbeth's relationship with the Witches is not just a psychological dependence, but also a dramatic symbiosis . . . .Psychologically Macbeth internalizes the Witches so that they become a principle of his own conduct." (p. 132).

Her greeting,

> Great Glamis! Worthy Cawdor!
> Greater than both, by the all-hail hereafter!
> Thy letters have transported me beyond
> This ignorant present, and I feel now
> The future in the instant.
> (ll. 54-58)

both re-states, with the emphasis of repetition, the theme of greatness and transcends the time-lag between the promise and the greatness. Such "transcending" is both direct and concealed. The forthrightness of "all-hail hereafter" and "future in the instant" needs no comment, but the indirectness of "transported" would seem to warrant comment since the idea of ecstatic transport subtly parallels what Macbeth has termed his "raptness" and, still more subtly, interprets that raptness as decisiveness. That the cleverness of her greeting, especially its designed presumption of a oneness of his intentions with hers, is not wholly successful as a form of persuasion is exposed by the neutrality of her husband's utterances, which reveal Duncan's intentions but not his own. Hence what is subtly implied in the greeting is now overtly taught in the exhortation:

> O! never
> Shall sun that morrow see!
> Your face, my Thane, is as 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 th' innocent flower,
> But be the serpent under't. He that's coming
> Must be provided for; and you shall put
> This night's great business into my dispatch;
> Which shall to all our nights and days to come
> Give solely sovereign sway and masterdom.
>
> (ll. 60-70)

The dramatic function of this speech is very complex. On the one hand, it presents Macbeth with, as it were, a mirror image of his own regicidal desires and, on the other, it draws more attention to his independence of choice than to the collusion that Lady Macbeth advises. In terms of its mirroring the hero's evil inclinations, it presents him with "Machiavellian" maxims on the policy of expediency and the practice of guile that echo and should seem to reinforce his ambitious tendencies. The response to and control of occasion advocated in the "time" maxim is reminiscent of a step that must be o'erleapt (I. iv. 49) as a response to the unexpected. The employment of outward welcome is a device worthy of one who would not let "light see [his] black . . . desires" (I. iv. 51). The use of such evasions as "provided for" and "great business" as a technique of contemplating evil in totally amoral terms has ironic appropriateness for a listener who, as Jorgensen says, himself used a "pronoun without antecedent: 'yet let that be' followed by 'it'" (I. iv. 52-53)[65] to distance "murther" from conscience. And "never/Shall sun that morrow see" (ll. 60-61) is merely an intensified echo of "Stars, hide your fires" (I. iv. 50).

In saying that the tirade draws our attention to Macbeth's freedom of choice, I suggest that Lady Macbeth's rhetoric fails in the short run, for "We will speak further" (l. 71) is the reply of one who, whatever the unspoken implications of his letter and of his earlier utterances in this scene, still allows "the Interim" to weigh the pros and cons of matters that are as strange to his soldierly arm as to his struggling conscience. In terms of Lady Macbeth's parting remark ("To alter favour ever is to fear . . .") one may find in "We will speak further" some intimation of Macbeth's recognition of the unimaginative simplicity of the mind that contemplates "solely sovereign sway": "solely" utterly denies the reality of conscience as a factor in decision, whereas his own unseated heart of the soliloquy in Act I, Scene iii invalidates that denial. The same limited imagination makes possible the retort, "To alter favour ever is to fear" (l. 72). "Fear" is but the relativist term for what in the value-system of the absolutist is nothing other than the civilizing discipline of moral norms--that is, conscience as a force operating in harmony with the beneficent in Nature. Macbeth's own imagination, however, is not so limited, as will be evident in his next appearance, when he speaks the "If it were done" soliloquy.

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[65] Our Naked Frailties, p. 48.

Even Lady Macbeth's emphasis on her own "manliness" draws our attention to the independence of Macbeth's choice. "My dispatch" and "Leave all the rest to me" are repeated offers of co-operation that seem to imply her failure to move his nature to that single-mindedness that typifies her supposedly unsexed self. The manly element in him ("That which cries, 'Thus thou must do'" [l. 23]), as she sees it, is qualified by effeminate undecisiveness ("That which rather thou dost fear to do,/Than wishest should be undone" [ll. 24-25]), but the decision is, nevertheless, to be his alone ("You shall put/This night's great business . . ." [ll. 66-67]), the mere agency hers. The sense of her own intrepidity coupled with her lack of probing curiosity about his private thoughts suggests that she is prey to the shallowest of self-delusions. Macbeth's problem is one of decision-making about whether or not the business is to be done, not a problem of cowardice. We know this, for we have known a Macbeth who, if will can prevail in the struggle with conscience, is well capable of wielding his own keen knife.

"What Is a Man?"

The first six scenes of Macbeth are a prelude that helps define clearly Macbeth's knowledge of what regicide involves and emphasize the fulness of his responsibility for the crime he decides to commit. The two scenes featuring the Witches (I. i. and iii.) introduce in turn the phenomenon of inverted values and the possibility of the hero's partaking in deliberate confusion of relative and absolute concepts of the good. The two Duncan scenes (I. ii. and I. vi.) help define the values and the vision of life that characterized Macbeth in the past and that should ideally be characteristic of him in the future. The two Lady Macbeth scenes (I. v. and I. vi.) help define, first in precept, then by example, the vision and the values that must be adopted if the hero is to secure the greatness desired by him and promised by the Witches. Macbeth himself appears in three scenes, first with the Witches, then with Duncan, and afterwards with Lady Macbeth. With the Witches he encounters the problem of confused values, but is sufficiently perceptive to recognize that, paradoxically, the self-fulfilment promised him also involves self-betrayal. With Duncan he is involved in a re-statement of the values he is prompted to betray, but the sentiments voiced by him run counter to the desires he strongly feels. With Lady Macbeth, he learns what his desires imply, but he cannot yet commit himself to the ruthless logic of her lesson. In each scene he learns aspects of what will be involved if and when he chooses a good that can only be his through evil means. Act I, Scene vii shows how well he has understood the various aspects of what this choice involves and, thus, illustrates the nature of his guilt.

The soliloquy that opens the scene shows how clearly Macbeth considers that the act of regicide and the responsibility for that crime are his and his alone. Though his wife had spoken of her willingness to arrange and even commit the crime, Macbeth in his soul-searching never thinks of her encouragement and never considers her declared willingness to dispatch the "night's great business" (I. v. 68) herself. It is significant that from the hero's point of view Lady Macbeth's role is peripheral to his decision-making and, hence, to his guilt.

The Macbeth who, in the soliloquy, appears for the first time alone is psychologically as well as physically alone, and in this isolation we see him meditate on the important step from consideration of murder to self-commitment thereto. The clarity with which he recognizes the complexity of things is all the more striking when we consider how determinedly his wife, by a self-violating act of will, had earlier dismissed such complexity as irrelevant. Macbeth is capable of acknowledging the worthlessness of the good which is the object of his strong desires. He seems to be capable of rejecting that "good" when his wife enters the stage to interrupt his meditation. Soon the possibility of such a rejection seems remarkably remote, and it may appear that a weak Macbeth is overwhelmed by his wife's strength of will unless one discovers that Macbeth exploits and is not overcome by Lady Macbeth's single-mindedness and that, therefore, Lady Macbeth's strong role as persuader emphasizes rather than diminishes her husband's ultimate guilt.

It is only by contrasting the reservations about regicide revealed by Macbeth in his soliloquy and those voiced by him to Lady Macbeth that we can discover how subtly Shakespeare establishes Macbeth's exploitation of his wife's singleness of purpose as buttress to his own anarchic inclinations. Our understanding that the hero is not a victim of his wife's machination is inevitable if we recognize the disparity between Macbeth's public arguments against murdering Duncan and his private insights as to why the crimes should not be committed. His arguments in the soliloquy centre primarily on moral considerations; the arguments presented to Lady Macbeth are solely expedient in nature. The irrelevancy of the one to the other is notable: it bears a significant resemblance to the use of heterogenium in the temptation-scene (i.e. the device of providing answers that are totally irrelevant to the questions asked) and to the equivocator's ploy of suppressing inconvenient aspects of truth. In the disparity between the one set of arguments and the other we may detect an attempt by Macbeth to rely on the simplistic vision of his wife as a crutch that will enable him to hobble past the illuminating insights of the soliloquy before striding single-mindedly into the darkness that each of them in turn has associated with regicide, he in "Stars hide your fires!/Let not light see . . ." (I. iv. 50-51) and she in "Come, thick Night . . ." (I. v. 50-54). Successfully to by-pass those insights would be in his case to make a commitment to self-division that is tantamount to her idea of unsexing herself, but a commitment made in the light of an awareness that is beyond her ken. The unrelatedness of the discrete arguments of the soliloquy and of the ensuing dialogue becomes the measure of the contrasts in language, in ethics, in selves and in realities that now weigh in the balance of commitment. And the ultimate irony will prove that, just as Lady Macbeth's unsexing of self becomes a pathetically futile wish, Macbeth's divorcing of self from self and of truth from truth is a tragically futile act of will.

The very context of the soliloquy draws attention to the likelihood of Macbeth's commitment to such a tragic act of will. As he enters, his isolation is emphasized. We see him against a background of viand-bearing servants busy about a feast in Duncan's honour. He has, we learn, withdrawn from a banquet-table that epitomizes the communion with nature and society from which his obsession alienates him. By his very withdrawal he is distancing himself from a wholesome present with its explicit promise of a future plenitude of honour: his King has begun to plant him and would labour to make him full of growing (I. iv. 28-29). The place of Macbeth in the ordered Duncan world is already associated with, and defined by, the imagery of the preceding scene. There the voices of Duncan and Banquo united to provide a word-picture of Inverness and its owners in language rich with reference to honour, nobility, wealth, grace, love and life-giving.

In Act I, Scene vi Banquo, hearing Duncan's recommendation of Macbeth's castle's "pleasant seat" and healthful air (ll. 1-3), spoke at some length of "the temple-haunting martlet" (ll. 3-10) in a speech that so perfectly depicts and so fully interprets his subject as to constitute an emblem. As he composes his emblem we discover that the bird's nest draws together the creative force of the divine ("Heaven's breath/Smells wooingly" [ll.5-6]) and the procreative forces in nature (the martlet's "pendant bed and procreant cradle" [l. 8]) into unison. The bird becomes a symbol of all that Macbeth is soon to reject.[67] Banquo's choice of epithet, "temple-haunting," associates the castle with the house of God.[68] Macbeth's potential rejection of this harmonious coupling of the noumenal and phenomenal, of the transcendent and immanent, in favour of a future whose wholesomeness is of a different order, is already associated with another bird, the hoarsely-croaking raven in Act I, Scene v, which is soon to be the emblem of his reign. And just as Lady Macbeth's courteous responses to Duncan's royal gallantry in Scene vi were characterized by images connotative of the calculating, the mercantile, the quantitative, so must his rejection of the temple-haunting martlet involve the eschewing of all that is not palpable and calculable. When Duncan has spoken of the subject's display of love to the sovereign as something beyond the quantifiable, Lady Macbeth replies in language that describes "service . . . twice done" as but "poor and single business" (I. vi. 14-16; emphasis added here and throughout the paragraph), "honours deep and broad" as "loaded" on her house (ll. 17-18), dignities that are "heap'd up" on earlier favours (ll. 18-19), and speaks of the feudal bonds of love and duty in the Shylockian terms of "compt" and "audit" (ll. 25-28). The contrast between this imagery and the King's concern with the "fair and noble" (l. 24) and with loving "highly" (l. 29) is ironically underlined by her own earlier pronouncements about the high and holy. Macbeth's isolation from the high and blessed communion of the banquet indicates, even before he begins his soliloquy, his inclination towards the thoughts and terms we have so closely associated with the raven of discord.

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[67] The martlet is not a widely-used symbol, and it has no place in emblem books. One may look to Whitney in vain (*A Choice of Emblemes*) [Leyden, 1586; rpt. New York: Benjamin Blom, 1967]). Scot-Giles in *Shakespeare's Heraldry* (New York: Dutton, 1950), p. 210 tells us that the martlet is "a heraldic bird, sometimes depicted without beak or feet," but cannot make this information relevant to Shakespeare (whose only other reference to the bird is in *The Merchant of Venice* II, ix. 28, where it is associated with naivete and vulnerability). Reference to Stephen Batman convinces one of non-association of the bird with the symbolic either in fourteenth- or sixteenth-century lore: we are told simply that martins (i.e. martlets) "love mens company and make nests in their houses" and that they are good to eat (*Batman uppon Bartholome* [London: Thomas East, 1582], XII, 21, p. 185). Shakespeare's symbolic use of the martlet in *Macbeth* is unique, it would seem. Its association with Macbeth's virtuous life is inescapable, and the contrast with the hoarsely-croaking raven and screeching owl, birds associated with the hero's criminality, is carefully effected.

[68] "Temple-haunting" is a strangely ambiguous image, because "haunting" not only denotes "frequenting" but has connotations of ghosts and spirits that walk the night. The positive denotation enables us to associate the martlet with Macbeth's virtuous life, especially his loyalty to Duncan, "the Lord's anointed *temple*." That past in the form of conscience haunts and will haunt Macbeth, so that he never wholly will escape his association with the martlet. But the Witches' words haunt him too, and "temple-haunting" is an image antithetical to their diabolically haunting reassurances. The image thus captures and echoes something of the tensions that exist in the absent hero's consciousness.

Macbeth's "If it were done" soliloquy represents a continuation of the thought-processes of his very first soliloquy (I. iii. 127-43), with the difference that now raptness is replaced by reasoning--the emotional encounter with an idea by reflective insight. In other words, he is now free to analyze coolly the moral significance of the instinctive forces loosed within him by the temptation to greatness (and to which earlier he responded feelingly). As he explores the meaning which underlay his earlier contemplation of murder, his reason affirms the truth of what his imagination then grasped intuitively:

> Present fears
> Are less than horrible imaginings.
> My thought, whose murther yet is but fantastical,
> Shakes so my single state of man,
> That function is smother'd in surmise,
> And nothing is, but what is not.
>
> (I. iii. 137-43)

"Present fears" may refer generally to human encounters with frightening phenomena, as most editorial glosses suggest;[69] but it may also refer to Macbeth's immediate physical reaction to the idea of regicide--to the reaction to that "horrid image" which, as he says,

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[69] Muir is typical in simply equating "fears" with "objects of fear," which is given as def. #3 by Onions, Glossary, p. 79 and def. #2 by Cunliffe, A New Shakespearean Dictionary, p. 116. Why "fears" may not refer to the experience of dread just described is, to my knowledge, explained by no editor. See O.E.D., "Fear", sb., def. #2: "The emotion of pain or uneasiness caused by the sens of impending danger, or by the prospect of some possible evil . . . In early use applied to [the] more violent extremes [of the emotion], now denoted by alarm, terror, fright, dread."

> doth unfix my hair,
> And make my seated heart knock at my ribs,
> Against the use of nature.
> (ll. 135-37)

The latter interpretation suggests that the contrast involves not so much terrors that in experience are more tolerable than in fantasy, as an emphasis upon the inferiority of fearful sensations to horror of the reality of what is contemplated. But whichever of these interpretations is the more likely, the statement as a whole introduces a significant contrast: that of experience encountered at the level of the physical with experience encountered at the level of idea. It reveals that Macbeth's imagination has an icastic (that is, mimetic) quality that reaches to the very Idea of regicide, and to the very Idea of its horror, identifying the absolute or ideal reality of the crime in a timeless manner. That superior reality is dominant, and Macbeth's unseated heart and unfixed hair represent a fear related to the truth of that reality. Fear, then, is nothing other than the operation of an intuitive moral sense.

The intuitive encounter with the idea of murder involves a conflict of realities, a conflict in which the superior reality of the ideal asserts its primacy against the inferior reality of the phenomenal. The "single state of man," the unison of metaphysical and physical, is momentarily shattered, so that "function"--the mental and physical activity of the now--is suspended, and Macbeth lives solely at the level of "surmise," the level of his encounter with the thing in its timelessness. Thus the final line, "Nothing is, but what is not" (l. 142) becomes charged with complex meaning: "nothing" defines the status, in his awareness, of the physical universe; "what is not," while defining the crime that does not indeed exist as yet in time, and is therefore from the phenomenological point of view non-existent, refers ironically to the sole reality that preoccupies him--the crime in its metaphysical BEING. From this moment forward, the word "nothing" will serve as a pointer to the reality that Macbeth, to his cost, will learn to deny. Indeed, one may go so far as to say that the *anagnorisis* in *Macbeth* involves the discovery that "what is not"--incorporeal reality--IS.

The assertion that Macbeth's imagination is a gateway to truth may seem startling in the light of the attitudes of such critics as Kittredge and J.Q. Adams, who consider it abnormal and delirious. Henry N. Paul draws upon their pronouncements to support his thesis that Macbeth's imagination is the worst part of him.[70] Identifying Shakespeare's attitude to the imagination in *Macbeth* with that of Theseus in *A Midsummer's Night's Dream* (V. i. 1-22), Professor Paul claims that the very foundation of the play is the idea that "the too great strength of the imagination may work the downfall of a man" (p. 49). In support of his argument he dips into such works as North's translation of Plutarch's Lives, Reginald Scot's Discoverie of Witchcraft and Montaigne's essay "De la force de l'imagination" to find evidence in support of his thesis that Macbeth is afflicted by an abnormal fantasy which causes him to trust unreality rather than reality (p. 49) and makes him "a melancholy man who imagines that he hears and sees the things enumerated by Scot [i.e. "visions, spirits, ghosts, strange noises," (Bk. XV, ch. 39)] and is by them made a coward and destroyed" (p. 51).

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[70] *The Royal Play of Macbeth* (1948; rpt. New York: Octagon Books, 1971), pp. 44-74.

Professor Paul follows common Elizabethan usage in making no clear distinction between "fantasy" and "imagination"[71] and reflects a widespread Renaissance bias in speaking of the unreliability of the faculty and the dangers associated with it.[72] The normal doctrine in Elizabethan treatises on imagination is that this faculty, which relies on the untrustworthy senses for its information, is, too often, an unreliable mirror of reality, passing on distorted images to the reason, understanding and will. Because of this, we find that Davies of Hereford's treatment of the subject in *Mirum in Modum* is substantially in agreement not only with Burton's in the *Anatomy of Melancholy* but with that of numerous other authorities such as Bartholomaeus Anglicus, Timothy Bright, Pierre Charron, Fulke Greville, Pierre de La Primaudaye, and Reginald Scot, who teach us that the imagination or fantasy is the principal source of our ills and the cause of disorderly passions, rash judgments and irrationality generally.[73] It is this view of the faculty that informs Montaigne's sentence, "Fortis imaginatio generat casum,"[74] and provides the groundwork for Professor Paul's views on Macbeth's imagination.

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[71] A striking example of this may be found in John Davies of Hereford Mirum in Modum (in The Works, ed. A.B. Grosart [1878; rpt. New York: AMS Press, Inc., 1967]), pages 6-10. Davies promises to make distinction between "Imagination, Fancie, Common-Sense" which some, he says, "makes one," while some "make difference" (p. 7). The precise distinction is almost impossible to discover. This is hardly surprising, because Davies has already equated the faculties: in Stanza 13 he speaks of "Imagination, Reason, Memory," then in Stanza 18 he discusses the function of "Fantasie . . . Memorie . . . Reas'n," clearly treating imagination and fantasy synonymously (p. 6). Later in the treatise he has little to say about imagination as such, but much about "Fantacie." Robert Burton seems to use "phantasy" and "imagination" interchangeably in The Anatomy of Melancholy, ed. Floyd Dell and Paul Jordan-Smith (1927; rpt. New York: Tudor Publishing Company, 1955), I. i. 2. vi. (p. 137) and I. ii. 3. i. (pp. 220-224). The historical basis of this confusion of terms is discussed in chapter I, above.

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[72] See Ruth Leila Anderson, *Elizabethan Psychology and Shakespeare's Plays* (Iowa City: University of Iowa, 1927), pp. 27-28, 133-35, Murray Wright Bundy, "'Invention' and 'Imagination' in the Renaissance," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 29 (1930), 535-45 and William Rossky, "Imagination in the English Renaissance: Psychology and Poetic," *Renaissance Studies*, 5 (1958), 49-73.

[73] See *Mirum in Modum*, pp. 6-10, *Anatomy of Melancholy*, 220-24, *Batman uppon Bartholome*, Bk. III, ii, Bright, *A Treatise of Melancholy* (London: Thomas Vautrollier, 1586), pp. 77 ff., Charron, *De la Sagesse*, Vol. I, pp. 160 ff., Greville, "A Treatie of Humane Learning" (in *The Works of Fulke Greville, Lord Brooke*, ed. A.B. Grosart [Edinburgh: for the Fuller Worthies' Library, 1870] Vol. II), pp. 9 ff., esp. stanzas 10-16, La Primaudaye, *The Second Part of the French Academie*, trans. T. B[owes] (London, 1594), p. 149 and Scot, *Discoverie of Witchcraft* (rpt. New York: Da Capo Press, 1971), pp. 30 ff.

But what Paul ignores is the emphasis in Mirum in Modum and elsewhere on the positive role of the imagination; according to Davies of Hereford, this faculty produces not only fantastic "Chimeraes" but "Beauties . . ./That doe the Mynde beheav'n with Matchless blisse" (p. 8). The fantasy is not always distorted. Even Bacon, himself no great champion of imagination, admits so much; he acknowledges that divine grace uses the motions of the imagination as an instrument of illumination in the same way as the motions of the will are used as an instrument of virtue,[75] thus associating the imagination with an ideal moral order. I take issue with those who see Macbeth as a victim of delusive fantasy or distorting imagination on the grounds that his imagination is illuminative, that it is constructive, raising and erecting the mind, revealing truth rather than coining "chimeraes." I suggest that instead of concentrating on Montaigne's "fortis imaginatio generat casum," we should rather view Macbeth's imagination in the light of Ronsard's assertion that "l'inven-

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[74] Montaigne's Essays, I. xx., trans. John Florio, ed. L.C. Harmer (London: Dent and Co., 1965).

[75] See Of the Dignity and Advancement of Learning, V. i; in The Works of Francis Bacon, Vol. IV, ed. James Spalding et al, (London: Longman, etc. 1860), p. 450.

tion n'est autre chose que le bon naturel d'une imagination concevant les Idées & formes de toutes choses que se peuvent imaginer tant cellestres que terrestres, animées ou inanimées."[76]

What Ronsard asserts about the value of poetic invention and the constructive function of the imagination is a commonplace in Renaissance defences of poetry. I shall cite as examples Puttenham, Tasso, and Sidney, all of whom endeavour to rescue the imagination from the negative assertions of the psychologists by stripping from the concept of imaginative feigning its association with lying and restoring to it its original sense of "making"[77] and, so, asserting that what the poet expresses is "the animation of a Platonic Idea."[78] Sidney explicitly makes such a claim in his *Apologie for Poetrie* when he states that "any understanding knoweth that the skil of the Artificer standeth in that *Idea* or fore-conceite of the work, and not in the work it selfe" and that the poet's having "that *Idea* is manifest, by [his] delivering them forth in such excellencie as hee hath imagined them" (p. 157).

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[76] Quoted by Walter R. Davis, *Idea and Act in Elizabethan Fiction* (Princeton, N.Y.: Princeton University Press, 1969), p. 36.

[77] See Sidney, *An Apologie for Poetrie*, in Smith, *Elizabethan Critical Essays*, Vol. I, p. 157; Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie*, p. 3, and Torquato Tasso, *Discourses on the Heroic Poem*, trans. Mariella Cavalchini and Irene Samuel (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1973), p. 31. Further citations will be provided with page-references to these works.

[78] Davis, p. 30.

The good imagination does not lie; it feigns, indeed, but feigns like truth, as Jonson has it in his Discoveries.[79] Puttenham makes the same point. In The Arte of English Poesie, he exalts the poet's role as "maker or counterfaitor" over "all other artificers, Scientificke or Mechanicall," attributes the poet's excellency to "some divine instinct" which, as he says, "the Platonicks call *furor*"(p. 3), and distinguishes between two kinds of phantasy, one of which is disordered and "*phantasticall*, construing it on the worst side" (p. 18), the other an ordered phantasy which represents the "most comely and bewtifull images and apparances of thinges to the soule and according to their very truth" (page 19). Puttenham says, further, that it is through the operations of ordered phantasy we become "illuminated with the brightest irradiations of knowledge and of the veritie and due proportion of things" and that, therefore, "it is to the sound and true judgement . . . most needful" (pp. 19-20).

Tasso and Sidney are more daring: the imagination not only "counterfaits" like truth, it expresses ideal truth, which is superior to the mere truth of fact. It is because of this faculty, they tell us, the poet can best fulfill his function as provider of instruction, delight and moral persuasiveness (*docere*, *delectare*, *movere*). Tasso speaks of what we recognize as Puttenham's good phantasy when he appeals to Dante's praise of "*l'alta fantasia*" in the *Divine Comedy* (*Purgatorio*, XVII, 25-26, *Paradiso*, XXXIII, 142) in order to promote his own constructive view of the imagination. Tasso argues that the poet feigns, that he creates idols (*Discourses on the Heroic Poem*, p. 31) but that as a maker of idols he is like the mystic theologian ("who forms images and commands them to be") providing us with images of intelligible reality, which Plato associates with being, rather than images of visible reality, which Plato puts in the genus of non-being (p. 32). For Tasso, poetic imitation is "icastic" rather than "fantastic," truthful rather than playful. This is Sidney's view too: he says that poetry when merely "*Phantastike*" infects the reader's "fancie" with "unworthy objects" but that poetry "should be *Eikastike*, which some learned men have defined, figuring forth good things" (*Apologie*, p. 186). For Sidney, the icastic imagination is the source of "good invention," producing speaking pictures"of what should be" (p. 185), fashioning the higher nature of the golden world whose reality is ideal (p. 156).

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[79] Ben Jonson, Timber, or Discoveries, in Critical Essays of the Seventeenth Century, ed. Joel E. Springarn (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1908), Vol. I, p. 50.

I am suggesting that failure to keep in mind the Renaissance distinction between distorting phantasy (the fantastic imagination) and good phantasy (the icastic imagination) prevents critics such as H.N. Paul from examining

Macbeth's imagination in its function as ally of truth. Preoccupied with the concept of reality held by Renaissance realists, Professor Paul ignores the neo-Platonic concept of the ideal as higher reality, and goes so far as to say that "it is Macbeth the Pictish poet, too full of black bile, who says, 'Nothing is, but what is not' . . . [who] was of imagination all compact, and out of [whose] abnormal imagination grew his fatal habit of trusting unreality instead of reality."[80] This is somewhat ironic because the reader may be led to a contrary conclusion. Paul's very mention of "Pictish poet" might have suggested what Puttenham, Tasso, Sidney, Bacon, Jonson and many others had to say about the nature of the poet's mind. What is not mentioned allows for a Macbeth whose tragedy has more to do with the denial of the poet in himself than with the hero's condition of melancholy.

To introduce the idea of Macbeth as poet is admittedly a hazardous step. It may seem to involve us in one of those potential excesses of the Bradleian school of criticism --that of attributing to the character what should properly be attributed to the dramatist. Kenneth Muir warns us against so fallacious a practice. In his introduction to the Arden edition of the play, he says that if we pretend that the poetic imagery of passages such as the soliloquy in

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[80] The Royal Play of Macbeth, p. 49.

Act I, Scene vii "is a proof that Macbeth had a powerful imagination, that he was in fact a poet, we are confusing real life and drama." He then explains that the poetry spoken by a dramatis persona "is merely a medium" and that, while the imagery Macbeth uses "expresses his subconscious mind, . . . we must not say he is therefore a poet." I think that Muir is wrong in this, though I have no quarrel with the general good sense of his reminder that dialogue in poetic drama "does not necessarily reflect [the] poetic disposition"[81] of the speakers.[82] What Muir ignores is that in discussing a tragedy such as Macbeth, a drama that is so concerned with the meaning of words and with the vision of truth informing that meaning, the critic cannot assume absolutely that a character's language must necessarily be divorced from his "poetic disposition." By "poetic disposition" I mean, of course, the particular form of insight that was said in Shakespeare's day to characterize the poet; and Sidney, on the authority of Scaliger, refers to the distinction between insight and mere utterance when he asserts in the Apologie that "it is not riming and versing that maketh a poet" (p. 160) and that "One may be a Poet without versing" (p. 182). I suggest that Macbeth is not Paul's melancholy "Pictish poet," victim of delusive fantasy, but a poet in the sense that he is lifted up by the vigour of his imagination to contemplate the reality of things which can be truly said to "intende the winning of the mind from wickedness to vertue" (Apologie, p. 172). His imagination, pace Paul-- and Theseus-- fulfils on the level of his own psychology that function which the humanists saw as the end not only of poetry but of all learning, the incitement to virtuous action--to wisdom. Indeed it is his imaginative insight that to a great extent redeems Macbeth for the audience. A less imaginative, less insightful man could not have worked his way in Macbeth's fashion through poetic equivocation to its horrible conclusion. His ambitious nature chooses an immediate and limited good; his poetic insight defines that good as evil and, hence, contrary to the self-fulfilment he seeks. Two contrary concepts of the utile battle within his mind, and what awes us is the powerful quality of his articulation of the awareness of what this conflict involves.

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[81] See Muir, "Introduction," pp. lvi-lviii.

[82] One might take for example the first Murderer's lyricism in "The west yet glimmers with some streaks of day . . ." (III. iii. 5-8) as an instance of the general wisdom of Muir's position.

Macbeth's imagination, when the Witches' prophecies presented themselves to him even at the moment of utterance as temptation, immediately perceived the reality of regicide. What his imagination then grasped, his reason, as he approaches the moment of decision, approves as truth:

> If it were done, when 'tis done, then 'twere well
> It were done quickly: if th' assassination
> Could trammel up the consequence, and catch
> With his surcease success; that but this blow
> Might be the be-all and the end-all--here,
> But here, upon this bank and shoal of time

> We'd jump the life to come.--But in these cases,
> We still have judgment here; that we but teach
> Bloody instructions, which, being taught, return
> To plague th' inventor: this even-handed Justice
> Commends th' ingredience of our poison'd chalice
> To our own lips. He's here in double trust:
> First, as I am his kinsman and his subject,
> Strong both against the deed; then, as his host,
> Who should against his murtherer shut the door,
> Not bear the knife myself. Besides, this Duncan
> Hath borne his faculties so meek, hath been
> So clear in his great office, that his virtues
> Will plead like angels, trumpet-tongu'd, against
> The deep damnation of his taking-off;
> And Pity, like a naked new-born babe,
> Striding the blast, or heaven's Cherubins, hors'd
> Upon the sightless couriers of the air,
> Shall blow the horrid deed in every eye,
> That tears shall drown the wind.--I have no spur
> To prick the sides of my intent, but only
> Vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itself
> And falls on th' other--
>
> (I. vii. 1-28)

The first sentence of the soliloquy places the act of murder in the opposed scales of time and the timeless. The contrary weight of opposed values seems reflected in the contorted rhythms and convoluted syntax of the opening lines. Moral awareness struggles with immoral desire, and the nature of the conflict between higher reality and the reality of the here-and-now is reflected in the form of the sentences. In the initial statement, "If it were done" betrays the tendency of desire to consider the physical deed without reference to its metaphysical significance; but "if" acknowledges the near-impossibility of such a wish. Yet the contrary conclusion is tried in "then 'twere well/It were done quickly": should the physical reality of the act be its sole truth then it were indeed "good" to capture the future in the instant.

But that the whole truth of the reality of the act transcends the physical is evident from the equivocal quality of the word "done," which is invested with the "if good"/"if ill" ambivalence of an earlier passage. "When 'tis done" refers "done" to the concept of a deed completed in time and space; but "If . . . done" refers the word to a reality, to a framework of ideas, that would define that completeness as incomplete--that would define the deed in terms of significance rather than of activity. Hence the irony of the incomplete complete that is based on the equivocal quality of "done" reveals (in Macbeth's case here as in Donne's in "A Hymne to God the Father," where the ambiguity of "done" is similarly explored) the clash of reality with reality and attests to the superiority of the timeless truth. The inescapability of higher reality--a regretful "inevitable" to the expedient self--informs the structure and content of the sentences that follow: "if th' assassination could . . .," "that but this blow *might be* . . . ." It is already clear that Macbeth, even before he objectively studies his situation as if it were a case in *The Mirror for Magistrates* ("But in these cases . . .")[83] and before he brings his social conscience to bear on his duty to Duncan, recognizes the evident inadequacy of the physical as the real. What he wishes were "nothing" *is*, as he intuitively knew in Act I, Scene iii.

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[83] E.M.W. Tillyard, *Shakespeare's History Plays* (1944; Harmondsworth, Mddx.: Penguin Books, 1962), p. 320.

The recognition that the reality of the physical is inadequate as a measure of the human informs the whole soliloquy. As Macbeth ponders the moral implications of the deed, he is aware of the existence of a moral order in the universe which predetermines macrocosmic outrage if he chooses to sever the bonds tying kin to kind, host to guest, and trusted subject to virtuous king. Since he dismisses from consideration theological reality and the retribution traditionally associated with "the life to come," the progression of his thoughts depends upon the validity of what is real in another sense of the timeless. That is, it is based on credence in the natural law and its obligations, the latter crystalized in the concept of transcendent even-handed Justice. Because the ideal order of creation is the ultimate measure of human acts and values, the virtues of a murdered Duncan can "plead like angels, trumpet-tongued" (l. 19); they can define the horrid deed in a manner that decorously articulates its full truth. The image meaningfully echoes the ideal word-knowledge pattern of the Duncan world, the normal pattern for the heroes of that world, Macbeth as he was before his encounter with the dualistic.

The Pity and the Judgment Macbeth attributes to the outraged macrocosm are images of his own grasp of the significance of the contemplated act. The imagery of doom--trumpet-tongu'd angels, horsemen-cherubin, and deep damnation--is dissociated from what religion reveals of the ocean that stretches forth from the banks of time. The damnation Macbeth imagines is experienced in the here and now. Its reality is psychological rather than theological. It is the damnation of one who experiences guilt in the realm of human awareness rather than in a place or supernatural state called hell. Macbeth's fall is to be judged in terms of the complex fullness of human psychology and not by the criteria of the individual's relation to the divine. His fall will be a departure from the Eden of the unified self, if lust for power overcomes the higher love that sustains the harmonies of the universe which, with its virtues, its pity, and its judgment, corresponds to the reality of his ethical being.

The unavoidability of relating murder to the higher reality of his imagination--of subordinating "If ill" to the "If good" considerations of Act I, Scene iii--is emphasized by the progression from the nakedly phenomenal connotations of "this blow" (l. 4) to the ethical implications of "horrid deed" (l. 24). It is reinforced by the contrast of "catch/ With his surcease success" and the "poisoned chalice" emblem of self-destructive action. The ethical self defines "success" (in its sense of "achieved greatness" and, possibly, of "retribution following--succeeding--crime") as death, and this is ironic because the expedient self would have the deed, without its meaning, as "end-all". The symbol for the metaphysical reality of things here, as elsewhere in the play, is the eye. Where the expedient self would have the eye wink at the hand in action, the better self discovers the universal significance of that action in an apocalyptic image of Pity wringing tears from every eye, his own included; thus, the "be-all" of the deed inevitably includes its ethical significance.

The higher reality of the ethical implications of the deed diminishes in Macbeth the will to act. Between intention and performance he has experienced the let of what Lady Macbeth has already termed and will again define as "fear." But "fear" in her sense of the word has a univocal dimension that is denied by the complexity of Macbeth's encounter with the spurs and curbs to desire. "Fear" cannot be equivocated out of its relationship with the metaphysic of love's order any more than can the word "done". And that "done" cannot be confined to the univocal is admitted in the final metaphor of the soliloquy, the picture of intent as a reluctant steed which can be goaded only by chaotic desire, whose excessive fury can lead but to a fall. Yet, though the will to act is diminished, Macbeth still speaks of "my intent" and still acknowledges "ambition" to be his. The ethical self has spoken its truth but has not entirely won the debate. Hence, it is not without significance that the final sentence fails of its own completion when Macbeth's abridgement comes in to teach him the invalidity of his insightful "if."

Lady Macbeth enters the scene at a moment when the audience is aware of Macbeth's "ability to see all of the implications of his act in their most frightening forms before the act is committed,"[84] and aware too that the insight has weakened but not overcome the will to act. What the inner eye has seen the hand may yet darkly attempt. The entrance of Lady Macbeth leads directly to the revitalization in her husband of the will to act and, so, to the decision-making that is the climax and terminus of the first movement of the play.

This climax has been interpreted as the submission of Macbeth to a stronger will than his own.[85] Such an interpretation leads to an over-all judgment of *Macbeth* as a play that falls short of tragic greatness, for, as Rossiter put it, it implies that "Shakespeare focuses his play on the tool, not the agent."[86] I say that such a view is wrong, because the discovery of a Macbeth lacking independent strength of will at the moment of decision arises from misreading. It depends upon a concentration on the dialogue-exchange between Macbeth and his wife without due reference to the soliloquy that precedes it. To examine the superficies of the "submission" without acknowledging, as Macbeth does, the insistence of the spur to such submission is to fall into the trap mentioned by Rossiter. "I have no spur . . . but only/Vaulting ambition," however negatively phrased, identifies positively the insistent presence in him of a predisposition to action. Though this predisposition may seem forthrightly to be rejected immediately afterwards, when Macbeth declares, "We will proceed no further with this business" (l. 31), yet the reasons he offers in support of the declared intention convince us otherwise:

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[84] Irving Ribner, *Patterns in Shakespearian Tragedy* (1960; rpt. London: Methuen and Co. Ltd., 1969), p. 165.

[85] See William Rosen, *Shakespeare and the Craft of Tragedy* (1960; rpt. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967), p. 68.

[86] A.P. Rossiter, *Angel with Horns* (London: Longman, 1961), p. 217.

> He hath honour'd me of late; and I have bought
> Golden opinions from all sorts of people,
> Which would be worn now in their newest gloss,
> Not cast aside so soon.
>
> (ll. 32-35)

The disparity between these reasons against the crime and those discovered in the soliloquy is important in terms of the shaping of Lady Macbeth's influence and in terms of the weight of that influence. Her query, "Why have you left the chamber?" is open-ended, but Macbeth's reply indicates that he uses her presence as an occasion to silence the echoes of moral awareness that have resounded throughout his meditations. That awareness has distanced him from the deed and, so, from the "greatness" he has promised her (I. v. 13). In blinding himself to its insight he adopts the terminology appropriate to her "fell purpose," using "this business" (cf. I. v. 68) to distance the assassination from the court of macrocosmic Justice. He echoes her characteristic metaphorical mercantilism to argue against the deed on the basis of sheer expediency. His implicit devaluation of "honour" and "opinion" from the plane of the intrinsic to the extrinsic accords with the Machiavellianism of her "Look like th' innocent flower" exploitation of semblance. In sum, to argue as he does is to invite counterargument on the level of the expedient, the level of his baser and rationally reprehensible leanings.

Lady Macbeth predictably accepts the invitation, and the mode of her counter-argument is as predictable as that of her encouragement in Act I, Scene v. Acting as if convinced of the efficacy of her prayer to the spirits who in their "sightless substances . . . wait on Nature's mischief," she becomes a force that will seem to halt the spirits who, for Macbeth, ride on the "sightless couriers of the air." She ignores the negative light in which he viewed the crime in the soliloquy just ended, emphasizing the "when 'tis done" element of his opening line, and equating "if it were done" with pusillanimity. Thus, she becomes the embodiment of the ethical myopia Macbeth craved when he uttered, "[let] the eye wink." And she does so by arguing for the deed in language that deprives such words as "courage," "manhood" and "guilt" of all ethical denotation. In this way, by the denial of the validity of those truths which his imagination reveals as true, she becomes the rhetorician who teaches him a new language, a language validated only by her shrouding of her moral self in the "thick night" of moral obscurity:

> Nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark,
> To cry, "Hold, hold."
>
> (I. v. 53-54)

Lady Macbeth's attack on Macbeth's unwillingness to act is undertaken with two unsurprising weapons. The first is drawn from her Machiavellian arsenal; it is the concept of Manliness as a condition informed solely by intrepid resolution and vigorous action--manliness as defined by *virtù* and measured by mere physical achievement. The second is provided by the inadequacies of his argument of expediency. And the nature of their earlier intercourse predetermines the choice of weapon. Thus the strategy of attack is implicitly provided by Macbeth.

Her reply begins thus:

> Was the hope drunk,
> Wherein you dress'd yourself? Hath it slept since?
> And wakes it now, to look so green and pale
> At what it did so freely. From this time
> Such I account thy love.
>
> (ll. 35-39)

These words have a complex effect, because underneath the drunkenness/hang-over metaphor there lies a conceit that counterbalances the image of the soldier "dressed" in the armour of resolution with the image of pallid and green-sick effeminacy. Consequently, "From this time/Such I account thy love" is charged with suggestions of the castrated lover. The audience may well anticipate the tenor of such a response because, educated by Lady Macbeth's "unsex me" orison, we understand her association of the feminine and, hence, the effeminate with all that is not remorseless, treacherous, and kindless. Macbeth, because of the nature of her advice (in Act I, Scene v) that the night's great business be appropriately provided for, should understand it too. Hence, there is no irony in the predictability of the assault.

The thrust of the second part of Lady Macbeth's response is equally unsurprising:

> Art thou afeard
> To be the same in thine own act and valour,
> As thou art in desire? Would'st thou have that
> Which thou esteem'st the ornament of life,
> And live a coward in thine own esteem,
> Letting "I dare not" wait upon "I would,"
> Like the poor cat i' th' adage?
> (ll. 39-45)

The attack here depends upon the contrast in emphasis in one term used by Macbeth, "this business" (I. vii. 31) with the stress of the phrase he has earlier heard her use, "This night's great business" (I. v. 68). The omission of the epithet is notable. It suggests a measure of insincerity, for the expressed desire to rest content with "golden opinions" (I.vii.33) when the "golden round" offers itself so readily is strange for one whose letter revealed a reiterated concern with greatness and none with honour (I. v. 12, 13). The intimation of insincerity is reinforced by the triteness of "Worn now in their newest gloss" (l. 34): the word "gloss" associates the honour in question with superficial lustre and, possibly, deceptive appearance (O.E.D. "Gloss" Sb., 1 and 16) hence with what is merely decorative and essentially unrelated to one's own worth;"gloss" may also be ambiguous, appealing by means of an uncomic pun to the idea of interlinear explanatory notes in a text and, thus,to interpretation that may be more ingenious than accurate--in which case Macbeth's statement becomes not only cynical with reference to the notion of exploiting semblance but also with reference to the validity of Duncan's interpretation of Macbeth's heroism as worthy and honorable. In any case, Macbeth, by this statement, contrasts the superficiality of glossy opinion, however "golden," with the substantiality of the "golden" crown and invites, as it were, a rejoinder that will weigh the substantial against the superficial, a rejoinder that restates the resoluteness of his wife's "O! never shall sun that morrow see!" (I. v. 60-61). For these reasons the argument of expediency, coupled as it is with silence about the truths analyzed in the soliloquy, can be seen as shaping the counter-argument it elicits.

Lady Macbeth's words to his point have a threefold effect in elucidating the nature of the choice confronting the hero. First of all, by daring him "to be" (esse) what he is "in desire" (posse), they reaffirm that the quest for greatness involves commitment to the unkind self he discovered on the heath. Her voice becomes an extension of the latent self that then was capable of asking, "If ill, why hath it given me earnest of success?" The choice involves the rejection of the kind self, which she associates with "fear." But the unkind, unnatural, expedient self can only become the essential Macbeth if ideal reality ceases to have meaning for him, as he has already learned. Secondly, the decision to actualize that latent self involves the adoption of values that are utterly relativistic: should desire, or ambition, define what he esteems as "the ornament of life" as summum bonum, then "good" and "ill" are given meaning according to a new ethic, the criterion of what is conformable with the Will-to-Greatness. According to this ethic the "Golden opinions" hesitation is "ill," because it threatens to leave as potential what the heroic will, unfettered by loyalty, would realize. And, by implication (for Macbeth's next remark recognizes it) the evaluation of duty, loyalty, and all other bonds in the scales of orthodox ethics is a failure of heroic purposefulness. The choice of the ethical self is in these terms "ill," for in the perspective of "greatness" as "the good" it is a choice of cowardice (1. 43). Clearly, the choice involves the acceptance of the Witches' confusion of values as a principle of behaviour. Associated with the rejection of ideal reality and the reversal of humanistic values is the choice of univocal vocabulary, and the third effect of Lady Macbeth's speech is to show the importance of this as a factor in the decision she would have him make. In order to translate the wish-to-act to act-of-will, Macbeth must dismiss the awe with which he encountered the metaphysical reality of an outrage against nature as nothing but "fear" of physical action, and must equivocally approve soldierly brutishness as "manliness." By the adoption of such a view of the fearful as the manly, all ambiguities of language are deprived of their tensions. "Good" and "ill" are no longer ambiguous terms. The ambiguity of what may be deemed "good" in terms of the values supported by the absolutist's concept of the universe (a universe animated by the force of Love, of which Macbeth's "pity" and Justice" are essential facets) and what is deemed "ill" in terms of values informed by a naturalistic concept of man's world (the Edmundian notion of the world as a realm of Becoming, given meaning only by the human will) disappears. When the phenomenal only is accepted as the real and the relativistic only is the true, then tensions between "good" and "ill" are cancelled, and "ill" is the only valid term for orthodox "good." By a like declension, "coward" is the only valid label for him who fails to harness valour to desire, and "done" has a finality that conclusions about what "may not be done with when it is done"[87] cannot invalidate, for "what may not be done with" is not worthy of consideration when the world one chooses to live in is Machiavelli's rather than Pico's.

I mention Pico because of the centrality of his doctrine of will to his optimistic view of man's potential for greatness, a doctrine that parallels in emphasis, but contrasts in all other respects, Lady Macbeth's Machiavellian assertions about the function of the human purposefulness. In his *Oratio de dignitate hominis* Pico asserts that man once born into the world of transience "can become what he will," and that because of this privilege he has the moral responsibility to endeavour to rise above the condition of the wild animal and senseless beast; man should therefore "let a certain holy ambition invade" his soul, so that he can "pant after the highest . . . and toil with all [his] strength to obtain it."[88] For Pico it is in the soul of man that human dignity resides and, while he associates with contemplation rather than action the holy ambition by which man can raise himself to spiritual greatness, his concern is with the role of the human will in the achievement of man's godlike potential. Though Pico here may seem to have forgotten the doctrine of the fall and its attendant insistence on the depraved state of man, at the core of his thesis lies a comprehensive view of man shared by Christian humanism. The humanist vision of man sanctions the aspiring mind in its striving towards a dignity that is measured by the timeless, and that transcends--and indeed rejects--the aspiring mind of the world's Tamburlaines and of rash zealots such as Coriolanus, Hotspur and young Fortinbras, who base their sense of dignity on earthly name and fame. For Pico and for humanistic writers such as Erasmus, More, Ascham, Elyot, Castiglione, La Primaudaye and Spenser, the glory of man resides in his being a rational being capable of meaningful and responsible choice, and it is in the making of moral choice, in the exercise of his will, that he demonstrates his moral excellence. According to this view, the very quality of civilization lies in the exercise of responsible choice and in the phenomenon of self-discipline, by which microcosmic man brings his life into harmony with macrocosmic natural law.

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[87] The phrase is Rossiter's (*Angel with Horns*, p. 216).

[88] Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, *Oration on the Dignity of Man* in Ernst Cassirer *et al.*, ed., *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), p. 227.

The humanists' optimistic view of man is based on the rejection of both his propensity towards evil and the irrational and his ability by the use of reason and free will to live morally and rationally. The influence of Cicero's *De Officiis* is important to such optimism: Cicero asserts that man because of his reason is superior to the beasts (I. xxvii) and thereupon develops his doctrine of moral decorum (I. xciii-cli) which we find reflected in the ethics of worldly piety in Castiglione's *Il Cortegiano* and Elyot's *The Governour*. This ethical optimism teaches us that man acts in an arena of self-making, not on a stage of fools, if he exercises his will responsibly. Ascham associates the perfect mentor with religious truth, honest living and "right order in learning,"[89] convinced that the teacher's exemplary prudence and good order will be a model for the student's choice of the right way of living. La Primaudaye confidently asserts that human excellence lies in reason and that nothing better becomes reason than the exercise of virtue, for "vertue is a proportion and uprightness of life in all points agreeable to reason."[90] More in the *Utopia* shows the relationship between human happiness and virtuous living, which is living according to nature, living rationally in accord with the divine pattern of things. It is such an ethical view that informs Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, where we find Guyon, Temperance, aided by the Palmer, Reason, demonstrating the ability of man to prevail in the battle against the depravity that flesh is heir to. Erasmus in

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[89] *The Scholemaster*, ed. Edward Arber (London: Constable, 1927), p. 23.

[90] *The French Academie* (1586), p. 53.

Enchiridion Militis Christiani and in *Institutio Principis Christiani* combines the ideals of faith and learning, insisting on the role of grace as complement to reason and teaching a Thomistic doctrine of individual responsibility that emphasizes the role of will in meaningful living as clearly as Pico does in his *Oratio*, and doing so with similar optimism.

The Renaissance realist emphasizes, as the humanist does, the importance of reason and will in human affairs. Machiavelli, like Erasmus, sees life as a battle, recognizes the tensions between instinct and reason, and insists on the role of discipline in effective living. But his prince, unlike Erasmus's, imposes ruthless discipline upon others rather than on himself, exploits the failings of passion in others, lives according to the dictates of his own needs, dismisses the laws of nature and of God as inappropriate to the pursuit and exercise of power, and dismisses all concerns with conscience, with soul, and with transcendence from the ethic that determines his conduct. Lady Macbeth is the champion of this realism: she advocates the exercise of the irascible in her husband's nature as manifestation of his total adherence to the order of physical experience and, thus, like Machiavelli in *Il Principe*, subverts the ideal of *humanitas* and the system of values associated with it, and insists on a form of self-fulfilment that the idealistic humanist would define as self-defeat and would caution us against: Pico, providing us with Jacob's ladder as symbol for human ascent from animality to the angelic, encourages us to "bathe in moral philosophy as if in a living river" so that we will not be "hurled from the ladder as impious or unclean;"[91] Lady Macbeth praises vaulting ambition, having little respect for orderly climbing, and encourages her man to bathe in a river of dead men's blood.

In the "If it were done" soliloquy, we see Macbeth bathing in moral philosophy as he explores the meaning of regicide. The truths he then regards are in the over-all perspective of the play a "living river" that has as its antithesis the aridity of the sterile existence he is soon to choose. In his reply to Lady Macbeth's suggestion that his attachment to "golden opinions" may be a mask for "fear" or "cowardice"--in other words, a lie to hide his failure in naturalistic virtù--he asserts the moralist's ideal of manliness in answer to the ideal of action for which she argues:

> Pr'ythee, peace.
> I dare do all that may become a man;
> Who dares do more, is none.
> (ll. 45-47)

The appropriateness of "peace" in response to the warring valour of her persuasiveness gives the word the forceful quality of a significant uncomic pun. "Peace" signals his rebuttal of her perversion of idealistic ethics. He appeals to an ideal of manhood which we might associate with Spenser's Red Cross Knight to counter her ideal of self-indulgence and wilful exploitation of occasion epitomized in Spenser's Pyrochles and otherwise familiar to us in such "incarnations" as Richard III and other Machiavels of Elizabethan drama. In doing so, he rebuts also, with an appeal to the moral order, the very expedient objectives he himself has just voiced when he spoke of wearing glossy honour rather than of putting on the armour of righteousness so becoming to man as moral being. His claim that he possesses the daring to do what becomes man ideally conceived implies a mistrust of the manliness of the Machiavel. What is implicit here is similar to what the Jacobean writer Thomas Milles asserts when he says that "There are so many incivilities mingled with our Man-hood, that they simpathize rather with Wild Goats, or the heart of Bulles; then with the reall excellencie of humaine Nature, which being the Image of Divinitie, figures unto us another kinde of strength and courage, then that which is proper to brute Beasts onely."[92]

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[91] The Dignity of Man, in Cassirer, p. 230.

To this brief exposition of the meaning of "man," Lady Macbeth responds with a witty, though passionate, reaffirmation of the courage and manliness that to her are real. Her reply picks up Macbeth's implicit mirroring of the orthodox ideal of the manly that we find in Cicero, Pico and Milles and in the writings of Renaissance humanists, but inverts the hierarchy of values underlying it:

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[92] Thomas Milles, *The Treasurie of Auncient and Moderne Times* (London: W. Jaggard, 1613; STC #17936). Eugene M. Waithe discusses this passage in "Manhood and Valor in Two Shakespearian Tragedies," *ELH*, 17 (1950), p. 263.

> What beast was't then,
> That made you break this enterprise to me?
> When you durst do it, then you were a man;
> And, to be more than what you were, you would
> Be so much more the man. Nor time, nor place,
> Did then adhere, and yet you would make both:
> They have made themselves, and that their fitness now
> Does unmake you. I have given suck, and know
> How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me:
> I would, while it was smiling in my face,
> Have pluck'd my nipple from his boneless gums,
> And dash'd the brains out, had I so sworn
> As you have done to this.
>
> (ll. 47-59)

Her sardonic rejoinder, "What beast was it . . .," indicates an acknowledgement of his definition of "man" as MORAL BEING in opposition to hers--of "man" as VALIANT BEING--but the end of such an acknowledgement is that he recognize both definitions as his and choose between them. By the satiric thrust of the question she asserts that he must choose between the self that calls murder "horror" and the self that would name it"business" or "enterprise." The rest of the speech forsakes satire for direct admonition, and it makes plain that he must define his realm of self-realization by creating an environment in which what the absolutist sees as a descent to the bestial is by the contrariety of the relativist approved as an ascent to greatness--an ironic inversion of the

Neoplatonic ladder! Failure to do so, whether explained with reference to "fear" or to adherence to the orthodox order of values, means the dissociation of the will from what Occasion, or Fortune, or Chance now offers and, so, the frustrating or "unmaking" or betrayal of the ambitious self. His choice must be to refuse to accept the role of creature in a universe in which "Good" has transcendent being and, instead, to take on the role of creator of a world in which "Good" is given existence by fiat of the ambitious will. By her mother-and-child parable she not only parades the image of her "unsexed" self as emblem of the manliness she advocates but indicates that what is involved essentially is a choice between opposite concepts of integrity. Her "manliness" makes "honour" synonymous with "greatness" and proffers the Will-to-Greatness as the "Good" to which all other interpretations of "good" are to be subordinated and, indeed, by the virtuosity of heroic purposefulness, rendered meaningless. The effect of "had I so sworn" implies an oath of fealty to the expedient self by which all other swearing is to be measured and found wanting. Such an oath nullifies all other commitments of loyalty, whether juridical, as in the loyalty of subject to monarch, or familial, as in the instinctive bond tying parent to child, or social, as in the implicit duty of host towards guest. The ethical self must, therefore, in the moment of choice have its naive brains dashed out. The self that shall as a result have "solely sovereign sway and masterdom" shall reject Aristotelian virtue, which is moderation, and commit itself to the excess of martial virtus which, because it is excess, Aristotle, in the Nicomachean Ethics, calls vice. According to that self, man is "so much more the man" by boundless commitment to the virtù of the self-aggrandizing instinct, and fealty to that instinct's promptings-become-edicts is the only integrity worthy of a man.

I have suggested that the idea of Macbeth's succumbing to a stronger will than his own does not accord with the psychological shaping of the dialogue in this scene. Lady Macbeth plays her part as naturalistic echo of Macbeth's ambitious self. Her silence about transcendental significance in Macbeth's response to her brutal celebration of heroic integrity suggests that she has assumed a role virtually demanded of her by the expedient emphasis of Macbeth's arguments against "this business," and thus served an anticipated function in the dialectic of decision-making. He returns again to considerations of expediency, reducing the crime's significance to the dimensions of its meaning in merely physical reality: "If we should fail?" (l. 59). "Fail" here is borrowed from her univocal vocabulary. It means "to fall short of criminal success." The idea of failure as betrayal of the godlike potential in humanity is completely excluded. The self is silent that once asked, "If good, who do I yield to that suggestion . . .?" Dialectic now gives way to decision.

Now that he speaks her language Lady Macbeth, who in her earlier rhetoric of persuasion spoke of courage indirectly ("fear," "coward") can advocate it with positive directness: "Screw your courage to the sticking-place/And we'll not fail" (ll. 61-62). Her assurance of success is offered with reference to the physical details of the organization of the deed, an assurance climaxed in the declared facility of transferring to Duncan's drunken chamberlains what she calls "the guilt/Of our great quell" (ll. 73-74). The irony of Macbeth's accepting as adequate so physical a definition of success is poignant if, first of all, we remember that in his first appraisal of "the horrid deed" physical reality was reduced to insignificance: "Nothing is but what is not." Secondly, the argument itself is specious, for the ability of Macbeth to bear the knife was never in question for himself or for the audience: the physical fact of carving his passage through the foe, "his brandished steel smok[ing] with resolution" (I. ii. 16-20) holds no terrors for him. Thirdly, he whom she would name the Coward-Macbeth can refute her definition of "guilt" as "evidence" by recalling a vision of Cherubim-horsemen that would define it as moral responsibility. But he does not. He adopts her relativism, her naturalism, and her language and, consequently, is silent about truths that contradict her assurances:

> Bring forth men-children only!
> For thy undaunted mettle should compose
> Nothing but males.
> (ll. 73-75)

These words herald the birth of the first man-child of her unsexed loins, the manchild whose defining quality is maleness, not humaneness. The potential self of the soliloquy following the triple prophecy of the Witches is now realized.

The birth of the naturalistic man is the death of the unified self. The habitual Macbeth[93] yields to the new Machiavel, the whole to the partial man. The image of the "naked babe . . . striding the blast" is rejected, and the self capable of recognizing that image is, like the mother-milking babe of Lady Macbeth's sermon on courage, sacrificed to the integrity of the heroic ambitious will. The silence of the habitual self resounds paradoxically in the final declaration of intent:

> I am settled, and bend up
> Each corporal agent to this terrible feat.
> (ll. 80-81)

The "horrid deed" is now a "terrible feat," admirable, heroic,[94] the signal of the release of valour from loyalty and just cause. Macbeth's readiness is appropriately "corporal," for considerations of the metaphysical are wilfully eschewed. The banishment of metaphysical reality and the consequent concern with the physical only make possible the comic bravado of the final lines:

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[93] See Proser, The Heroic Image, pp. 60-91, especially his remarks on Macbeth's need to soothe and suppress conscience. Proser's discussion centres on the concept of "Manliness" and the theme of the "divided Self." My debts to Proser are extensive.

[94] Proser, p. 59.

> Away, and mock the time with fairest show:
> False face must hide what the false heart doth know.
> (ll. 82-83)

These lines show how the relationship between word and truth is rendered meaningless: expression ("false face") hides rather than reveals what in the Ideal Reality, that was formerly his, it is assumed to reflect. Thus the parting couplet mirrors how the sacramental relationship between Valour and Loyalty is betrayed by the sacrilege of Macbeth's "I am settled" decision.

My purpose in the discussion thus far has been to illustrate the way in which Shakespeare organizes the first Act of Macbeth so as to focus our attention on the drama of choice and present to us a protagonist whose tragedy is one of intense awareness arising from his recognition of the moral dimensions of his choice. I have endeavoured to counterbalance the assertions of critics who claim, as Holloway does, that the central irony of the play "is that what Macbeth saw from the start as a mere difficulty in his way proved, bit by bit, to be the inescapable reality, and forseeable as such."[95] I have shown that in Macbeth's soliloquies the crime is encountered imaginatively and intellectually and recognized as involving the destruction of a world of meaning which had not been threatened before the beginning of Macbeth's obsession with becoming king. The decision he arrives at involves the destruction of the harmony of martial and moral virtue in him, and this decision is only possible when Macbeth plays the equivocator, suppressing his moral nature and giving free rein to the dictates of will directed by ambition rather than reason. What Macbeth encounters in his soliloquies and what he discusses with his wife is not a minor difficulty, and he knows it. What distinguishes him is the willingness to go to the extreme--"to th' utterance"--in order to test in experience what he already grasps imaginatively and intellectually. Macbeth dares to accept heroic virtue as a good *per se* and dares to suppress in himself all that challenges that acceptance. But just as the equivocator's suppression of aspects of truth is more apparent than real, so with Macbeth's suppression of the "kind" or "ethical" self. He knows how perverse is his "self-denial"; the stuff of the tragedy is his struggle against the fulness of that knowledge.

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[95] John Holloway, The Story of the Night (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1966), p. 69.

Macbeth's goal at the moment of decision-making is the embracing of the "greatness" to which the Witches' promises incline him. The choice of that goal involves, as we have seen, the negation of the coincidence of opposites in human nature, the willed cessation of the physical-metaphysical dialectic. What is involved then is the denial of paradox.

The nature of that denial and the futility of it are rendered explicit in Shakespeare's employment of equivocation as thematic device.

In the first sense of equivocation, that which relates to the ability of words to appeal to and incorporate antithetical, though not mutually exclusive, worlds of meaning, the first act of Macbeth illustrates the equivocal character of language in its exploration of the ambiguities inherent in certain key words: "fair," "foul," "good," "ill," "done," "fear," "coward" and, most significant of all, "man." The second sense of equivocation relates to the intention governing the use of language by a speaker who, aware though he is of these complementary meanings, chooses to use words so as to deceive his hearer by insisting on a single meaning; thereby, he determinedly suppresses the meaning or meanings that are inexpedient, and gives to verbal expression a univocal facade. In the first act of Macbeth, the struggle of self with self is conducted in such a manner that the outcome depends upon the choice of a limited view of the significance of words over a full awareness of their paradoxical comprehensiveness. The making of that choice--and the "if it were done" soliloquy is so placed as to make this irrefutable-- makes of Macbeth an equivocator who wilfully deceives himself.

From this point forward, Macbeth becomes a dramatic exploration of the implications of such equivocation. The hero chooses to deny his full sense of the inadequacy of the physical reality to which he commits himself. His later experience, however, illustrates the invalidity of this choice, for that experience is a sequence of encounters with the paradoxical comprehensiveness of the human condition. The inescapability of metaphysical reality, the impossibility of a reduction to nothing of the values championed by humanism, and the absolute insistence of language that it function as reflector of multidimensional meaning, all attest to the tragic waste concomitant with that choice. The language of simplistic definition that he learns to speak has within it the inescapable potential to make of complex life "a tale told by an idiot" if he insists on speaking it. And insist he will.

The implications of equivocation go beyond the sense of tragic waste, however, to incorporate a sense of tragic grandeur. For just as Macbeth's heroic integrity when coupled with loyalty to his King made him relentless in the battle overseen by Bellona, that integrity manifests itself with an equally intense relentlessness when coupled with loyalty to his own Will-to-Greatness in the battle of words and worlds. His rejection of the "poetry" of his own imagination, the language he spoke when words were mimetic of ideal reality, is total, and his fidelity to the non-ambiguous "poetry" of Will henceforth informs all his actions. By alienating himself from those truths that make man an actor in a coherent drama of self-fulfilment, he commits himself to validating the chosen truths of his own relativism and, thus, to the confusion of incoherence.

CHAPTER III

"To Know my Deed"

The first act of Macbeth constitutes an elaborate dramatic analysis of the significance of the hero's commitment to the act of regicide. The emphasis is placed on the choice, not the deed itself, so that the audience is brought to a thorough understanding of what that choice involves for Macbeth. It involves much more than the word "regicide" could possibly convey, because the contemplated assassination of Duncan is shown to be an outward sign of an inner upheaval in the murderer, and the play's exposition concentrates our attention upon that upheaval. Macbeth's willingness to make an attempt on the life of his King is based on the defeat of "cowardly" conscience and the victory of a "valiant" purposefulness which has as its essential ingredient the negation of what was formerly "real" and "good" in the life of the protagonist.

The second, third, and fourth acts of the play centre our attention on three phases of Macbeth's discovery of the inescapability of that reality which he willed to annihilate and on his reactions to that discovery. Each of these acts in turn centres on a murder and a vision. The murder in each instance is an objective indicator of the hero's self-commitment to the physical as the real. Each successive vision--the air drawn dagger, the ghost of Banquo, and the pot-pourri of images conjured up by the Witches--functions as an echo of the reality of "what is not." The sequence of visions as a whole, especially because of Macbeth's reaction to each of them, functions as a series of milestones that help us to measure the hero's progress along the way to deterioration. In another light however, we must see such deterioration as perseverance, as the manifestation of the integrity of Macbeth's adherence to the self he has chosen in Act I, Scene vii. Throughout these three phases of the tragic action, our awareness of the "madness" of Macbeth, on the one hand, and his "valiant fury " (V,ii. 13-14) on the other, makes our reaction to him ambivalent. Our knowledge that his choice of the empirical world as his realm of self-realization is insupportable in the perspective of those insights he has abandoned enables us to recognize the nature of the tragic waste involved. At the same time, we cannot deny that there is something that might well be called heroic about his tenacious fidelity to the terms of the choice he has made. The deterioration of Macbeth is related to his success in the willed suppression of the ethical self dedicated to the wholeness of what "may become a man"; this deterioration can be gauged in terms of the truths and values he contemplated and articulated up to the moment of his decision to murder Duncan. When he acted according to the logic of those premises, his valour and worthiness made him great, Herculean in prowess, and relentless, indeed invincible, in opposing and overcoming treachery. Hence, if ultimately we are to accept as valid the image of Macbeth as dwarfish thief too puny to wear the stolen robe of royalty (V.ii. 21-22), we can only do so by recognizing that the puniness does not relate to the absolute insufficiency of Scotland's foremost soldier to play a kingly role. The intention governing Angus' "Giant's robe/Upon a dwarfish thief" simile relates to the robe's being stolen rather than to the wearer's size, as Brooks rightly observes.[1] Yet the stature image is an appropriate symbol for the thief who, in Macduff's words, "hath broke ope/The Lord's anointed Temple, and stole thence/The life o' th' building (II.iii. 67-69). It is so because that sacrilege would have been avoided had he not so dwarfed the idea of manhood that "all that may become a man" is indistinguishable from indulgence in "the multiplying villainies of nature." By alienating himself from that royalty of nature that in the battlefield made him a man of unified being, and that in his various struggles with temptation pitted him against the metaphysical evil of naturalism, he has become a dwarfed man--dwarfed that is, when measured by the yardstick of the humanistic values characteristic of the Duncan world. Paradoxically, that same dwarf is the Goliath of tyranny to whom Macduff will ultimately play vanquishing David. In Act II, where Macbeth translates the idea of regicide into act, the centre of dramatic focus is the hero's re-commitment to such a paradox. His espousal of a diminished concept of manhood is appropriately solemnized when, having re-examined the contrasting languages of Conscience and Will, he firmly adheres to the latter.

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[1] Cleanth Brooks, "The Naked Babe and the Cloak of Manliness," The Well Wrought Urn (1947), rpt. in Alvin B. Kernan, ed. Modern Shakespearean Criticism (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, Inc., 1970), p. 393.

The second act of Macbeth has "the deed" at the centre of its dramatic focus. The first three scenes picture for us the preparations for the "terrible feat," the circumstances attending on its perpetration, and the events that are its immediate consequences. Unified in terms of time, place and action, they form a single movement. The fourth and final scene has an ancillary function: somewhat removed in time and place from the preceding unit, it provides a choric commentary on the "terrible feat" as "horrid deed."

The very structure of Act II may be seen as having ironic significance as an explication of the inadequacy of the concept of reality to which Macbeth is dedicated. The mechanical organization of events in Scenes i-iii follows the pattern of linear time: the significance of time seems confined to when events occur, as if paralleling Macbeth's decision to eschew all consideration of the timeless significance of his contemplated deed. Each scene provides an early reference to such mensuration:

> _Banquo_. How goes the night, boy?
> _Fleance_. . . . I have not heard the clock.
> (II.i. 1-2)
>
> _Lady Macbeth_. Hark! --Peace!
> It was the owl that shriek'd, that fatal bellman,
> Which gives the stern'st good-night.
> (II.ii. 2-4)
>
> _Macduff_. Was it late, friend, ere you went to bed,
> That you do lie so late?
>
> _Porter_. Faith, Sir, we were carousing till the
> cock.
> (II.iii. 23-25)

The sense that "when" is the sole measure of time's meaning and therefore, that Macbeth is living in a merely physical reality is reinforced by other aspects of the action. All three scenes take place in one location, during one night. Physical darkness palls in obscurity the agents of murder. The assassin's readiness to bear the knife is abetted by the drunkenness of the chamberlains. Lady Macbeth has prepared the daggers, the guest-room door is open; the somniloquence of Duncan's sons is proof that they have not witnessed the crime; the Macbeths have time to return the blood-stained weapon to the death-bed, and there is ample opportunity for washing of hands and donning of nightgowns. All of this assures the aüdience of Macbeth's immunity from detection. All of this should assure Macbeth that the crime, being done, is truly done with. All of this would indeed reassure Macbeth if naturalistic rationalism were the only criterion for judging guilt. Further events seem to make assurance doubly sure, if physical reality is the only reality that is meaningful to the protagonist: after Duncan's subjects have learned of the regicide, the silence of the dead grooms, Macbeth's protestations of outraged loyalty, and the quick disappearance of Duncan's sons insure the successful completion of the swelling act of the imperial theme. We see Macbeth at his most powerful, dominating and controlling the physical details of the realm of which soon he will be crowned king. But we see also that, even when playing his most commanding role, he is not granted unalloyed success. Macduff anxiously questions his motivations in killing the chamberlains: "Wherefore did you so?" (II. iii. 10). Malcolm and Donalbain privately discuss the dangers that can emanate from those nearest to them in blood: "There's daggers in men's smiles: the near in blood,/The nearer bloody" (II.iii. 140-41) and they then escape to become a distant and vague force of retribution. Thus, events already threaten to prove right Macbeth's earlier insight into the de casibus implications of blood-letting: "We but teach/Bloody instructions, which, being taught, return/To plague th' inventor" (I, vii. 8-10). Consequences are not easily trammelled up even here upon the bank and shoal of time. The "prudential and selfish reasonings"[2] mentioned by Coleridge already seem to be validated. Nevertheless, if one were to judge this not-quite-complete success according to Machiavellian criteria, one would find that the weight of evidence favouring Macbeth's well-defined innocence is impressive. But it is impressive only in so far as innocence is defined in terms of the effective elimination of criminal evidence rather than in terms of the absence of moral culpability. The great irony of this and the subsequent scenes of Act II depends upon the explosive potential in the realities of fact to resonate with insistent echoes of truths that are larger than facts. The choric effectiveness of Act II Scene iv depends to a great extent on its insistent discovery of the metaphysical implications of many physical phenomena that are enumerated and discussed by the Old Man and Rosse. In this, Scene iv mirrors the ambivalence of the hero's own experience in Scenes i-iii, where his mastery of the phenomenal in no way insulates him from perception of noumenal reality.

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[2] Terence Hawkes, ed. Coleridge on Shakespeare (Harmondsworth, Mdd.: Penguin Books, 1959), p. 208.

The dramatic organization of the assassination scene itself demonstrates the primacy of the irony in question Shakespeare, having carefully shown that the accommodation of action to desire depends upon a view of the deed as a feat of arms made possible when undaunted soldierly mettle is infused with bow-bent readiness (thus a reduction of Macbeth's world to the utterly physical), significantly does not show us that feat in its physical actuality. When we consider how effectively Shakespeare can stage-manage the blood-bath of such figures as Julius Caesar, Coriolanus and indeed Banquo, we must allow that the off-stage death of Duncan is hardly necessitated by aesthetic problems: Shakespeare could, should his art demand it, aptly stage the gory death of so exalted and sympathetic a character. What, then, we might ask, is the aesthetic concern that makes it preferable that the audience does not witness the assassination? And why, we might further inquire as we survey the whole panorama of the play, do we see Macbeth--fiendish butcher that he becomes--kill no one but young Siward, whom he kills in an encounter that well becomes the prowess of Bellona's bridegroom, an encounter that is therefore unrelated to the central problem of guilt? It is surely in keeping with one of the play's essential dramatic purposes that the audience's indirect perception of the death of Duncan as physical phenomenon becomes the pattern for Macbeth's own relation to the central crimes of Acts III and IV, the butchery of Banquo and the Macduffs. In Act II, the audience is so distanced from the death of the King that what is not witnessed with the eye is all the more clearly perceived in its reality on a plane that transcends the merely factual. The procedural reversal that has us witness the physical horrors of the other principal murders, while Macbeth himself is physically distanced from them, reinforces the inescapability of his perception of them as evidence of the ultimate interrelationship of suprasensory and sensory realities. The off-stage murder of Duncan, then, because of the quality of the audience's awareness of it, becomes a dramaturgical metaphor for the essential equivocality of human experience and, hence, for the futility of Macbeth's determined adoption of the equivocator's ploy for the purposes of self-deception.

Act II, organized though it is about the "horrid deed," distances us from the deed as mere act so as to concentrate our attention on the significance of what Macbeth accomplishes. In the double action of this movement of the drama, the details of plot and character-interaction may be said to pale in our awareness in comparison with our observation of the psychic drama staged in the theatre of Macbeth's mind. What Crane says of the play as a whole is especially true of Act II: "What most sharply distinguishes our view of Macbeth from that of his victims and enemies is that, whereas they see him from the outside only, we also see him, throughout the other action of the play--the major action--from the inside, as he sees himself.[3] Indeed, we might go even further and assert that the audience can recognize beneath the conscious motivations of Macbeth-the-criminal-agent the subconscious tendency to determine his mode of action in compliance with the demand of the expedient self that echoes of his former, his normal, reality be silenced at any cost. Our awareness of this important aspect of his psychology enables us to see the close interrelationship between--one might even say, the ultimate identity of--the minor and major actions. That is to say, Macbeth's interaction with the other *dramatis personae* and his struggle with the philosophic problem that is at the core of his tragedy are fused into a unity for the audience. This fusion of the two-fold action of the play enables us to see individual characters both as persons and as symbols, for they are given this dual function. Indeed, it may be said that the primary function of Banquo in the play has to do with the inner drama, that is with Macbeth's struggle with the problem of ethics and reality.[4]

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[3] R.S. Crane, The Languages of Criticism and the Structures of Poetry (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1953), p. 171.

Though in Act II, Macbeth's attention is absorbed by his encounter with the deed in its vexing ambiguity and does not direct itself to the potential in other characters to diminish the success he is striving to make real, it is notable how Shakespeare makes us aware of the increasingly clear significance of Banquo's role, and of the importance of Macduff to what Crane calls the major action, by making them both the articulators of those truths Macbeth is bent on repressing. As a result, we are not surprised when, later, as the deed continues to resist his willed annihilation of its timeless reality, Macbeth recognizes Banquo and Macduff not only as palpable obstacles to his happiness but also (however unclearly on the level of consciousness) as embodiments of the truths and values of the Duncan world. They are, therefore, living representatives of a principle of human conduct, and of an ideal of human being, which, in order to come to the decision he arrived at in Act I Scene vii, Macbeth had had to reduce to nothing. Accordingly, once the death of Duncan ironically approves the validity of that principle of meaningful life, the later phases of Macbeth's activity--the "Banquo phase" in Act III, and the "Macduff phase" ominously announced in the closing lines of III. iv and ending with the destruction of Macbeth--are interpretable as renewed and equally futile attempts to justify the adoption of naturalistic relativism as the be-all and end-all of existence.

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[4] The symbolic function of character in *Macbeth* is treated in two short studies: Leo Kirschbaum's essay,"Banquo and Edgar: Character or Function?" *Essays in Criticism*, 7 (1957), 1-21, and Chapter VII of Irving Ribner's *Patterns in Shakespearian Tragedy* (London: Methuen and Co. Ltd., 1960), pp. 153-67, esp. 159 ff. Kirschbaum, essaying "to avoid Bradley's erroneous and misleading misreading" of Banquo's relationship with temptation and acquiescence to Macbeth's accession to the throne, insists that Banquo should not be approached as a psychologically valid being, as a whole man, but rather as a character solely designed as dramaturgic foil to Macbeth. Ribner argues for a morality structure in the play, showing how Banquo and Lady Macbeth stand for opposite sides of the hero. He fails to deal consistently with this relation of character and symbol, however; for example, having suggested that Lady Macbeth is a symbol for one half of Macbeth (p. 160), he deals with the separation of man and wife without considering the meaning of this in symbolic terms.

The association of Banquo with what I have termed the "Duncan Principles" and his dramatic function as foil to Macbeth are reinforced by the juxtaposition of his entrance in Act II, Scene i with the exit of Macbeth at the end of Act I, Scene vii. Macbeth departed, having arrived at a decision that, because of his commitment to the ethic of expedience, involved the denial of that macrocosmic harmony implicitly appealed to by Banquo in Act I, Scene vi. There Banquo described the delicate air and pleasant seat of Inverness in quasi-religious imagery. Macbeth's decision involved, too, the denial of wisdom of Banquo's warning, at the onset of temptation, that the Witches' promises may be equivocal, leading ultimately to betrayal rather than success. Beset now by the lingering attractiveness of the same temptation that upsets his fellow-warrior, and enveloped in the same physical and psychological darkness, Banquo addresses himself to the "merciful Powers" to restrain in him those "cursed thoughts" that Macbeth has accepted as a principle of self-fulfilment.[5] Thus, in the grim environs of the castle's real evil he may be said to strive to recapture his harmonious vision of Inverness, as articulated in Act I, Scene vi. The "merciful Powers" (l. 7) to which he prays remind us, meaningfully, of Macbeth's "Pity" (I. vii. 21) --but "Pity" embraced as saviour rather than feared as avenger. The reference to "cursed thoughts that nature/Gives way to in repose" (II. i. 8-9) implies the belief that "temptation kindles when reason is at rest."[6] It implies, further, the corollary of that belief, the assumption that active reason could not so err as to encourage the choice of what accords with the expedients of Machiavellian rationalism rather than the ideals of *recta ratio*. In this Banquo's thinking is consistent with his earlier fears that the Witches may be an illusion conjured up by the mind when one has eaten on the "insane root/That takes the reason prisoner" (I. iii. 84-85). Thus, even before Macbeth returns to the stage to tempt Banquo with the intimated "goods" of expedience, the mere juxtaposition of Banquo's resistance to "thick night" with Macbeth's succumbing to its evil establishes Banquo as a force antithetical to that incorporated in Macbeth.

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[5] I follow Kirschbaum in equating "the cursed thoughts" with the Witches' predictions (_Essays in Criticism_, 7, p. 4); "I dreamt last night of the three Weird Sisters" (l. 20) seems to confirm this interpretation.

The sense of such an opposition is further emphasized by the stage-business involving Banquo's armour:

> *Banquo*. Hold, *take my sword*.--There's husbandry in heaven;
> Their candles are all out.--*Take thee that too*.
> A heavy summons lies like lead upon me,
> And yet I would not sleep; merciful Powers!
> Restrain in me the cursed thoughts that nature
> Gives way to in repose! --*Give me my sword*.
> [Emphasis mine]
>
> *Enter Macbeth, and a Servant with a torch*.
>
> Who's there?

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[6] Sister Miriam Joseph, *Shakespeare's Use of the Arts of Language* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1947), p. 276.

Macbeth. A friend. (II.i. 4-10)

Banquo confronts the darkness which must strike the audience as an answer both to Macbeth's expressed wish that the stars obligingly hide their lustre and help conceal the black and deep desires of his intrepid bestial self (I. iv. 50-51) and to Lady Macbeth's prayer that heaven fail to penetrate the blanket of the dark (I. v. 50-54). Banquo recognizes the parallel between physical darkness and the mysterious obscurity of evil that threatens to realize itself in the heart's core. The inner reality of the threat to the wholeness of life is manifest to him, and to oppose it he lays aside the sword and cloak[7] of the courtier-soldier--his protection against the palpable onslaught of danger--and dons the armour of the Christian Soldier, prayer "to the instruments of light"[8] --thus throwing before him, as it were, "the impenetrable shield of faith"[9] and the sword of the will-to-virtue. By that double gesture, Banquo unwittingly provides a critique-in-action of the

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[7] I take it that "Take thee that too" refers to a cloak rather than shield or targe, which would seem unnecessary in a friendly castle. "That" could possibly mean dagger, of course, but if my reading is plausible Banquo is seen putting aside the instruments of offence and defence to fight with the defensive armour of faith and the offensive weapon of rightly-directed will.

[8] The phrase is Kirschbaum's, p. 4, where he comments on the antithesis of Banquo's prayer to the Macbeth's appeal to the spirits of darkness.

[9] Erasmus, Enchiridion Militis Christiani, I. i, in Dolan, p. 29. It should be noted that the Christian-humanist dimensions of Banquo's prayer do not necessarily lead us to interpret Macbeth as a Christian tragedy. Banquo fears evil, prays for grace to withstand it, but does so with reference to the avoiding of evil in this life and not to saving his immortal soul. Grace here then is, implicitly,

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a complement to what we might call his natural morality. Macbeth frequently shows a similar awareness of the interrelatedness of time and eternity. But Shakespeare focuses Macbeth's tragedy on what occurs when man, deliberately having eschewed concern with his eternal destiny, undergoes the experience of evil and its consequences on the bank of time. Macbeth speaks in Act III, Scene i of his having given his "eternal jewel" to the "common Enemy of man" (ii. 67-68). These expressions can be seen to refer to his soul and to the devil, hence to the Christian idea of damnation, but the expressions are markedly unspecific, especially when viewed in the context of Macbeth's immediately preceding reference to his "fil'd . . . mind" and to having put "rancours in the vessel of [his] peace" (ll. 64,66): "mine eternal jewel" may mean the soul in the Ciceronian as much as the Thomistic sense, and "common Enemy of man" can mean Evil generally as much as the Christian concept of Devil. Hence--and this will be especially evident in the discussion of the play's ending in Chapter 5, below--I am much more persuaded by critics such as H.B. Charlton, who suggests that evil in Macbeth is not presented in the strict terms of any Christian or other "school of spiritual pathology" (*Shakespearian Tragedy* [Cambridge: The University Press, 1961], p. 47) and R.M. Frye, who speaks of reference to Christian theology in *Macbeth* as having the function of holding the mirror up to nature in order "to show the course of *human life in the world*" (*Shakespeare and Christian Doctrine* [London: Oxford University Press, 1963], p. 255; emphasis mine) than by critics who advance a Christian reading of the play. I see nothing in *Macbeth* to persuade me that that play insists on the need for grace as a *sine qua non* of the good life; the role of grace is acknowledged, but the good that is betrayed by Macbeth is "good" as found in a more universal ethical system than the precisely Christian. Readings of the play such as those of Dolora G. Cunningham, Jane H. Jack, Irving Ribner, Roy Battenhouse and Robert Speaight strike me as being too deductive to be persuasive. I cannot follow Speaight in discovering a "profoundly theological" ending in *Macbeth* (*Nature in Shakespearian Tragedy* [London: Hollis and Carter, 1955], p. 68). Siegel's view (*Shakespearian Tragedy and the Elizabethan Compromise* [New York: New York University Press, 1957]) that Jacobean playgoers would have responded to the play as if it were a Christian tragedy, I find acceptable, but see no reason why they would not have seen the Christian appeal of the text to support, rather than displace, the primary emphasis on the law of nature.

baseness of Macbeth's newly-adopted concept of integrity and of its attendant view of man as beast. Banquo, whose will is here servant to no defect and whose reason guards him against the obsessions that waylay him in repose, is an image of man as paragon of animals, conscious of the divine destiny that is his and, accordingly, conscious of the need to combat impulses towards the bestial and diabolical. Then, when he hears Macbeth approach, and reaches for his sword again, we see him as the complete warrior, physically and spiritually intrepid, waiting to discover the identity of "a friend" who is the enemy of all that Banquo has just represented to us.

The question, "What is a man?" a query decidedly answered in Act I, Scene vii (See above, pp.167-72)is again asked and answered in this brief encounter between Macbeth and Banquo. Both of them know how "wicked dreams abuse/The curtain'd sleep" (II. i. 50-51), but what follows from the knowledge, how the individual will exercises itself, makes them antithetical representatives of manhood. Just as Banquo's account of the King's "measureless content" (II. i. 13-17) casts ironic light on the measured courtesies of a "most kind hostess" (cf. I. vi. 15-20, 25-28), so do his hesitations about the honours proposed by Macbeth cast ironic light on his host's quantitative sense of what becomes the valiant. Thus, his reply comprehends not only a definition of the meaning of "honour" but also of "man" and of "friend" in terms that are invalid in the Machiavellian evaluation of things.

The contrast of the attitudes of the two men in this important encounter before the murder of Duncan, gives special significance to the temptation of Banquo by Macbeth. The promise of future honours may be seen as an effort by Macbeth to resolve the dichotomies in his divided world. What is involved is the attempt on Macbeth's part to secure a new wholeness compatible with the naturalistic values he has adopted. Banquo embodies a principle of values and of language that cannot be accommodated in Macbeth's chosen world. To convert Banquo to collusion with his own "consent" --the indefinite term by which Macbeth alludes to the ruthlessly ambitious will--would be to succeed in eliminating from Macbeth's awareness the good Banquo represents and, therefore, to blur the distinction between the naturalist's and the humanist's definition of "good", or between the "good" and "ill" antithesis of Macbeth's former, orthodox ethics. The failure of Macbeth's attempt here will lead to the successful physical annihilation of Banquo in Act III. That that murder is an attempt at nullifying what Banquo represents is suggested by Macbeth's own words after their final conversation:

> Our fears in Banquo
> Stick deep, and in his royalty of nature
> Reigns that which would be fear'd: 'tis much he dares;
> And, to that dauntless temper of his mind,
> He hath a wisdom that doth guide his valour
> To act in safety. There is none but he
> Whose being I do fear.
>
> (III. i. 48-54)

It is, pointedly, his "royalty of nature," wherein "reigns that which would be fear'd"--"that" being, perhaps, the integrity of "virtue with valour arm'd," the "Duncan

Principle," the image of Macbeth's former wholeness--which is the basis of Macbeth's decision to destroy him; and the self-confessed fear of his very "being" reinforces our perception of the willingness to annihilate the man's significance by killing him.

The central irony of the banquet-scene, the climax of the play, will depend on the appearance of a ghostly Banquo as proof of the indestructible reality of the principle he represents. From that moment onward, Macbeth's story utterly becomes a tragedy of the hardened heart[10] : instead of acknowledging that the ghost's presence demonstrates the reality of guilt and, thus, the reality of the moral universe he had attempted to reduce to nothing, Macbeth rejects the evidence that proves futile his world view: "Unreal mockery, hence! . . . I am a man again" (III. iv. 106-107). The ghost's presence is proof to Macbeth that the moral universe, in which "guilt" can not be reduced to "evidence", has not been eliminated by a sheer act of will. Thus the ghost is indeed a "mockery," a mockery gainsaying the validity of Macbeth's chosen language and all that it implies. Nevertheless, Macbeth reaffirms his commitment to the physical as the real--in terms of which ghost and guilt are "unreal"--and to his chosen concept of manhood: "I am a man again." His will prevails despite his knowledge, but here as elsewhere it is evident that "his knowledge of the right principle is never altogether obscured."[11] Indeed, in rejecting the validity of what he knows and feels and in remaining faithful to the perverse integrity of his own will, Macbeth betrays himself to the very heart of loss.[12] This betrayal is, of course, proof of his fidelity to his tragic choice. But fidelity to the self that made that choice will ultimately insure that he can find "nothing serious in mortality." Such a discovery will be the inescapable conclusion of one whose existence has become a continuous effort to negate that principle of significant being he denied in order to kill Duncan--a principle whose continued existence he recognizes and fears in Banquo.

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[10] See Dolora G. Cunningham, "Macbeth: The Tragedy of the Hardened Heart," Shakespeare Quarterly, 14 (1953), 39-47, for a discussion of the atrophying of conscience as the cause of unfettered criminal indulgence and the reason for the impossibility of remorse.

The moral contest between what Macbeth wills and what Banquo represents reaches a climax early in Act II, Scene i during an apparently affable conversational exchange. Having presented his host with Duncan's diamond gift to

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[11] Crane, p. 171.

[12] Robert Heilman, " 'Twere Best Not Know Myself': Othello, Lear, Macbeth," in Shakespeare 400, ed. J.G. McManaway (New York: Holt, 1964), reaches a similar conclusion: "When a protagonist 'knows' that his course is morally intolerable, but strains frantically against that knowledge, lest it impair his obsessive pursuit of the course, the tension between knowing and willing may itself destroy him" (p. 94).

Lady Macbeth and courteously reported the king's expression of boundless contentment, he hears Macbeth reply,

> Being unprepar'd,
> Our will became the servant to defect,
> Which else should free have wrought.
> (II. i. 16-18)

To these words, which on one level are the courteous and humble protestation of a host flattered with high praise, and on another level may be understood as an uneasy reference to Macbeth's noted absence from the banquet-chamber, Banquo replies with a reassuring "All's well" (l. 19). But then he immediately steers the conversation from the subject of Duncan's pleasure to that of "cursed thoughts:" "I dreamt last night of the three Weird Sisters:/To you they have show'd some truth" (ll. 20-21). The theme of their conversation is now the relationship between will and desire. The coincidence of such a switch in subject-matter and Macbeth's remark about the will's servitude to defect suggests (though critics have failed to note its significance)[13] that Banquo is close to sharing the audience's awareness of a third level of meaning--the ironic--in Macbeth's words. The audience knows that the "defect" to which Macbeth's will is subject is his obsession with "the deed," an obsession that has led to the dehumanizing decision-making of the preceding scene. Banquo does not share this knowledge. However, when we realize that there has been no development that could in any way have further approved the validity of the Witches' truths[14] since the occasion when those truths absorbed the interest of both men upon the heath (I. iii.), we may find Banquo's redirection of the dialogue somewhat strange. When, further, we reflect that the appointment of Malcolm as Prince of Cumberland--which Macbeth saw as an obstacle to be hurdled on the course towards greatness (I. iv. 48ff.)--should have been to Banquo corroboration of his judgment of the untrustworthiness of the Witches' predictions, we must analyse the intention underlying the expression "To you they have shown some truth." These words must strike us as a veiled offer of complicity, or as unnecessary reiteration, or as a subtle attempt to discover how Macbeth has allowed the interim to weigh (cf. I. iii. 155-56) the prophetic greetings. The possibility of Banquo's offering to become an accomplice must be ruled improbable on the grounds that Shakespeare's departure from his main source, Holinshed, seems deliberately designed to contrast Banquo's probity with Macbeth's perversity. The suggestion of unnecessary reiteration (Banquo has already made the point in I. iii.) is unacceptable because it accuses the dramatist of careless workmanship in what is obviously a carefully-designed and economically-written scene. The third option, Banquo's testing of Macbeth's desire, seems the most valid, because the words "some truth" recall, but do not repeat, Banquo's earlier warning about verities which "win us to our harm" (I. iii. 123) and which in Macbeth's case might, "when trusted home, . . . enkindle [him] to the crown" (1.iii. 121); thus, he whom we have just seen as upright Christian soldier warding off the arrows of temptation may be seen here as trying to identify and defend against evil in another form.

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[13] Rosalie L. Colie, _Paradoxia Epidemica_ (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1966), pp. 234-36, does not comment on Banquo's role at this point, but she does comment on the irony in "servant to defect." She associates "defect" with the Augustinian notion of evil as "not-being." "According to that view," she avers, "to be servant to defect is, inevitably, to be not good, and even not to 'be'."

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[14] In the interim Macbeth has, of course, been made Thane of Cawdor (I. v. 5ff.) but this should not be seen by either to be a significant development: in the Duncan world promise is the assurance of performance, an assurance that is taken for granted by a society that assumes the perfect harmony of thought, word and deed to be normal.

Whatever one may decide about the intentions of Banquo as a character here, one cannot avoid the recognition that his words have a function that transcends the concerns of a Bradleian concentration on the motives of the _dramatis persona_. "To you they have shown some truth," in its re-evoking Banquo's advice after the temptation, may be seen in the total perspective of Act I to counterbalance the ethic of expediency and the concept of human worth for which Lady Macbeth is chief spokesman. In this way, Banquo, whose orison to the "merciful Powers" is seen by one critic as "the Good Man's (_any_ good man's) prayers by which 'under-Nature' is held in check,"[15] again functions as he did in

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[15] A.P. Rossiter, _Angel with Horns_, ed. Graham Story (1961; rpt. London: Longman, 1970), p. 231.

Act I, Scene iii, as Good Angel[16] providing a conventional Morality counterblast to diabolical suggestion.

Banquo's Good Angel function in reintroducing the topic of Macbeth's promised kingship is reinforced by the two subsequent movements which complete the matter of Act II, Scene i. The first of these is the brief discussion about honour. The second is the soliloquy preceding the murder, where the struggle of Macbeth's conflicting selves is renewed. In the first, Banquo counters Macbeth's idea of honour by contesting the validity of his language. Thus, Banquo becomes spokesman for that principle of being Macbeth would fain deny, a principle explicitly evoked in Lady Macbeth's "What thou wouldst highly,/ That wouldst thou holily" (I. v. 20-21). In the second, Macbeth progresses towards a moment of decisive action that is made possible by his determination to avoid "words [that] to the heat of deeds too cold breath gives" (II. i. 61). The "words" he eschews are not merely those that delay the death of Duncan; they include the very process of moral consideration that enables Banquo to retain his integrity. The exclusion of "words" is the dismissal of the ideas that could have persuaded Macbeth to rest content with doing all that may become a man as he traditionally conceived it--and this is made obvious by Macbeth's repetition of the same motif in "Strange things I have in head, that will to hand/ Which must be acted, ere they may be scann'd" (III. iv. 138-39) and, later, in

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[16] Clifford Davidson, The Primrose Way (Conesville, Iowa: John Westburg and Associates, 1970), Chapter IV.

> From this moment,
> The very firstlings of my heart shall be
> The firstlings of my hand.
> (IV. i. 146-48)

Macbeth's attitude to the conflict between words and deeds is analogous to Hamlet's in his reiterated commentary on the same problem--though the resolution of the conflict is markedly different for both protagonists. Hamlet would wear on his heart's core "that man/That is not passion's slave" (III. ii. 68-70) because he associates passion with bestiality and sees man really as "paragon of animals" when man, "Noble in reason . . . infinite in faculties," (II, ii. 300-304) refuses (as Polonius puts it) to "give any unproportion'd thought his act" (I. iii. 60), and refrains from allowing reason to pander will (III. iv. 89). Hamlet, whose concept of human dignity is similar to that appealed to by Macbeth in I. vii., is, like Macbeth, provided with a motive and cue for passionate action; however, the bloody deed that attracts him is unlike Macbeth's in that it promises rather to cleanse the foul body of th' infected world[17] than to outrage universal Pity. Hamlet's moral allegiance to the optimistic ideal of human rationality is coupled with the awareness that the act which for him will set the time aright (I. v. 189) has its basis in the "savageness in unreclaimed blood" that Polonius mentions so lightly (I. vi. 34) and that Hamlet himself contemplates so weightily. The bloody deed, to kill a king, may be warranted by cues for passion, but rational scrutiny of those motives demands "grounds/more relative" (II. ii. 589-90) than the dread command of a questionable ghost. On the other hand, the inaction resulting from the search for morally justifiable grounds for such an act may legitimately be termed cowardice. To be a coward in the sense in which Hamlet uses the word in "Am I a coward?" (II. ii. 556) and "Thus conscience does make cowards of us all" (III. i. 83) is to be unmanly in the light of that system of values that justifies "find[ing] quarrel in a straw/ When honor's at the stake" (IV. iv. 55-56). But, significantly, the lack of this cowardice in Hamlet is the prerogative of that passionate "man of honour" Laertes, whose honour is free of ties with allegiance, vows, conscience and grace (IV. v. 31-32). It is characteristic of young Fortinbras too, for his "divine ambition" (IV. iv. 49) makes him so Hotspurian[18] a man of action that he seems unlikely ever to discover that "special providence in the fall of a sparrow" (V. ii. 208-209). Hamlet's concept of honour is more complex, because he is committed to using the "godlike reason," which is for him the distinctive and noblest human attribute (IV. iv. 36-39). He is dedicated to an ideal--the "Hyperion" ideal--which in his praise of Horatio (III. ii. 59-70) and his dispraise of Gertrude (III. iv. 66-89) he contrasts with the notion of man-as-beast, prey to passion and impulse. According to that ideal, the right-acting man, made "with such large discourse" and capable of "looking before and after" (IV. iv. 36-37), prevents life from becoming a riotous Satyr-interlude precisely by making prologues to his brains before they begin the play (V. ii. 30-31). Whether as actor in the theatre or as man-of-action in the theatre of life--that is, in aesthetic and in ethical self-expression--man must "acquire and beget" a judicious "temperance," a responsible "discretion" (III. ii. 1-43) whereby act may accord with idea, and life (like drama) manifest meaningful coherence. By endeavouring to "suit the action to the word" in the matter of his filial duty to kill Claudius, Hamlet discovers that the refusal to let "godlike reason . . . fust in [him] unused" (cf. IV. iv. 38-39) makes impossible that sweeping to revenge promised in the whirlwind of passion. Between the intention and the act lies much unpacking of his heart with words (II, ii. 571)--words which are sometimes like the imprecations of a whore, but which are, much more often, the products of active "conscience"--words which are the expression of his fidelity to an ideal of human dignity, words which the Laertes in him sees as proof of cowardice, not of conscience. And even when impulse prevents his making prologues to his brains and he does act ruthlessly, later finding it possible to praise the rashness that makes action possible, the conclusion he reaches has none of the implications of Macbeth's dismissal of purpose-cooling words. Hamlet does not reject his concern for responsible action. Rather, he transcends it, for he confronts the mystery of the emergence of a meaningful design from actions that, because they are irresponsible, are failures in the context of ethical evaluation. It is his confrontation with this mystery that enables him to leave to Providence the words that are prologue to his final accomplishment and that makes him, even in the heat of his cloody deed, rather an implement of that "divinity that shapes our ends" (V. ii. 10) than a simplistically self-justified agent of a personal design. Hence his tale signifies something, and is worthy of an epilogue that will report the poor player Hamlet and his cause aright to the puzzled witnesses of his demise. And, thus,*Hamlet* enlightens our understanding of the tragedy of Macbeth. Hamlet discovers a world that is "weary, stale, flat and unprofitable" (I. ii. 133) because its "uses" attest more to unbridled passion than guiding reason. In such a world he habitually strives to realize his ideals. Macbeth, on the other hand, sharing Hamlet's concern with the relation between words and deeds, determines to silence the cogitative Hamlet within himself and become, as it were, a Claudius.[19] By rejecting what I have earlier called the "Duncan principle" Macbeth wilfully destroys his own Hyperion ideal.

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[17] *As You Like It*, II. vi. 60.

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[18] Fortinbras's willingness to "fight for a plot/ Whereon the numbers cannot try the cause" and "which is not tomb enough . . . /To hide the slain" (Hamlet, IV. iv. 62-65) has in it, to my mind, a recklessness manifested constantly by Hotspur, and especially in his "Die all, die merrily" approach to warfare (I Henry IV, IV. i. 134).

How far Macbeth has already progressed towards the destruction of the old order of his existence is suggested in his response to Banquo's account of his "three Weird Sisters" dream:

> I think not of them:
> Yet, when we can entreat an hour to serve,
> We would spend it in some words upon that business,
> If you would grant the time.
> (II. i. 21-24)

"That business" here is prompted by Banquo's "To you they have show'd some truth." The immediacy of the response at this point reflects the immediacy of the earlier relationship between the Witches' "two truths" and Macbeth's discovery that he is yielding to "suggestion" (I. iii. 134). But what upon the heath was an impulsive reaction has now, in the confines of the castle, become wilful decision. What was initially termed "horrible imaginings" (I. iii.138) is now referred to as "that business." By employing the word "business" Macbeth reminds us of the sinister connotations of that deliberately vague word earlier in the play. Both he and Lady Macbeth used it as a synonym for "murther," and their use of the device of improper or imprecise terminology (which device Renaissance rhetoricians labeled reticentia) was, as I have earlier shown, their technique for removing murder from all association with morality. Reticentia, then, is a device that is part and parcel of the peculiar idiom of naturalism in Macbeth. The hero's use of it here, therefore, shows his intransigence about denying the higher reality of the crime, his determination to ignore its status as "horrid deed." When he offers "honour" as Banquo's reward for complying with his own "consent" he is still speaking the same language. But Banquo answers in another tongue:

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[19] Maynard Mack, Jr., Killing the King (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), p. 149, introduces a similar idea, and also speaks briefly of an "idealized order of kingship, embodied in Duncan and attacked and destroyed by the villain hero."

> Macbeth. If you shall cleave to my consent . . .
> It shall make honour for you.
>
> Banquo. So I lose none
> In seeking to augment it, but still keep
> My bosom franchis'd, and allegiance clear,
> I shall be counsell'd.
> (II. i. 25-29)

In this passage Shakespeare exploits the traditional ambiguity attending the word "honour"[20] in a manner that makes the speakers spokesmen for two contradictory systems of values. In doing so he reinforces Banquo's role as Good Angel, as the voice that reminds Macbeth of that ideal combination of military and moral virtue central to the concept of manhood he had just chosen to forsake (i.e. in the preceding scene, Act I, Scene vii). As the audience must recognize, though Banquo cannot do so, the reply to Macbeth's offer serves as a virtuous "suggestion" that the protagonist now regain his former wholeness rather than translate into deed the decision prompted by the "suggestion" of the Witches. What is involved, then, is a matter of double temptation, the temptation of Macbeth to virtue and of Banquo to vice. Further, the quality of the discrete appeals is such that we can recognize in each an implicit definition of the speaker's world view.

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[20] C.L. Barber, The Idea of Honour in the English Drama 1591-1700 (Stockholm: Almquist and Wiksell, 1967), thoroughly discusses the many interpretations of honour. The appendix on p. 87 provides a useful summary. The most

The primary concern of the lines in question is the clash between the conception of honour as an intrinsic quality of the individual and the conception of it as something extrinsic to him. But this clash is prepared for by the complexity of "If you shall cleave to my consent, when 'tis," a line so full of ambiguity that it parallels the

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succinct account of the mixed and changeable ideas about honour current in the late Elizabethan and early Jacobean reigns is provided in the opening chapter of Norman Council's *When Honour's at the Stake* (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1973). Council shows that in the 1590's the most widespread assumptions about honour were more closely associated with the deadly sin of pride than with the virtue of justice (see especially pp. 12-13).

neutral effect of the Witches' prophecies in Act I, Scene iii in leaving the hearer to define for himself the meaning of the expression and, thus, define himself.

The Arden editor draws our attention to the purposeful ambiguity in "If you shall cleave to my consent," suggesting that, since Macbeth's words may be interpreted either as a bribe or as a canvassing of Banquo's support for the speaker's claim to the crown "in the event of Duncan's natural death, . . . it is difficult to say which of the two was meant."[21] Ignoring the questionable logic of trying to divine a single meaning in a statement which, we are told, is "purposely ambiguous," one can accept the explanation that "cleave to my consent" means either become my accessory or unite in common agreement with me--though it would be more meaningful to recognize that intentional ambiguity would make the meanings available together as a challenge to Banquo. But surely what the Arden editor misses is that the ambiguity is not confined, as he confines it, to the word "consent." "Cleave" too is ambiguous. If it is interpreted solely as "to adhere to," the sense in which Banquo has already used the word (and then too with reference to Honour),

> New honours come upon him,
> Like our strange garments, cleave not to their mould,
> But with the aid of use.
> (I. iii. 145-47)

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[21] See the New Arden Macbeth, p. 48.

then the above explanation is complete. But "cleave" also means to "cut or carve," a meaning germane to captains who are described in Act I, Scene ii as adept at unseaming their enemies; and Shakespeare frequently uses the word in this sense.[22] Since this is so, "cleave to my consent" has another, a more subtle, significance than has hitherto been recognized, even though there is basis for it in Holinshed:[23] it could be interpreted as a veiled invitation to join in the perpetration of a crime to which Macbeth has given his "consent".

Banquo's reply to Macbeth's subtle and complex offer of occasions that "make honour" shows a resistance to all levels of meaning implicit in the proposal. This resistance contrasts with Macbeth's succumbing to his wife's arguments for courage in the preceding scene. It is a kind of resistance which Sir Thomas Elyot, drawing on Cicero's *de Officiis*, acknowledged to be an aspect of the virtue of the magnanimous man: "Always a valiant and noble courage is discernible in two things. Specially, whereof one is *despising things outward*, when a man is persuaded neither to marvel at anything, neither to wish nor desire anything but that which is *honest*. Moreover, that a man should not bow for any fortune or trouble of mind. . . . By this [i.e. good courage, and also much constancy] it seemeth that magnanimity or good courage is, as it were, the garment of virtue, wherewith she is set out (as I might say) to the utmost."[24] For Banquo, honour is evidently the "prize of virtue" as it is for Aristotle and for humanist apologists for honour such as Shakespeare's contemporary Robert Ashley,[25] and courage is allied to goodness, truth and the abhorrence of deception, in accordance with the Ciceronian ideal.[26] Indicating his awareness of the distinction between honour as a social ornament, manifest in esteem, rewards and fame, and as one's private approval of the moral rectitude of one's own worth, he asserts that he is ready to forego success and the esteem of his fellows in order to avoid compromising virtue and, thus, becoming dishonoured in his own judgment.[27] In this, he exemplifies the "*probité bien avisée*" which Charron identifies with wisdom[28] and which

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[22] See, for example, _3 Henry VI_, I. i. 12, "I cleft his beaver with a downright blow;" _Measure for Measure_, III. i. 63, "To cleave a heart in twain;" _Hamlet_, III. iv. 157, "Thou hast cleft my heart in twain," and _Timon of Athens_, III. iv. 89, "Cleave me to the girdle." Reference to Marvin Spevack, _The Harvard Concordance to Shakespeare_ (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1973) shows that in the Shakespeare canon "cleave" in the sense of "cut" appears as frequently as in the sense of "adhere to."

[23] In Holinshed's account Banquo was an accomplice. See W. G. Boswell-Stone, _Shakespeare's Holinshed_ (London, 1896; rpt. New York: Benjamin Blom, 1966), p. 25: "At length therefore, communicating his purposed intent to his trustie friends, among whom Banquho was the chiefest, upon confidence of their promised aid, he slue the king at Enverns [i.e. Inverness]."

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[24] *The Governor*, III, xiv (emphasis added).

[25] See *Nicomachean Ethics*, IV. 3. Ashley's treatise *Of Honor* (c. 1600; Reprint of Sloane MS, ed. Edward Arber [San Marino, Cal.: Huntington Library, 1947]) allows for a distinction between honour and virtue: honour for Ashley is "a certain testimonie of vertue shining of yt self, given to some man by the iudgement of good men" (p. 34), but the *immoderate* pursuit of honour is vicious in the Aristotelian sense, and reason dictates the necessity of moderation in the pursuit thereof (see p. 41). Honour and virtue, for Ashley, should be in perfect harmony, since both should be defined with reference to the "chiefest good" (p. 37) and since God is the "beginning" of honour (p. 27), as He is the source of virtue. Honour, since it is the reward for virtue--which is identical to virtuous action--also, inevitably, incites to virtue, according to this treatise, provided of course that the pursuit of honour is temperate. What Ashley means by the chiefest good is not explicitly stated, but one may assume that it is the natural law (See Ruth Kelso, *The Doctrine of the English Gentleman in the Sixteenth Century*, [(Urbana: The University of Illinois, 1927.] p. 42).

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[26] Men who are courageous and high souled (*fortes et magnanimos*) shall at the same time be good and straightforward (*bonos et simplices*), lovers of truth, and foes to deception (*minimeque fallaces*)," Loeb Classical Library, trans. p. 65, quoted by Rodney Poisson, "Coriolanus as Aristotle's Magnanimous Man," *Pacific Coast Studies in Shakespeare*, ed. W.F. McNeir and T.N. Greenfield (Eugene: University of Oregon Press, 1966), p. 219.

[27] See Watson, *Shakespeare and the Renaissance Concept of Honour*, pp. 11-12. Banquo's concept of honour has its affinities with that promoted by Guillaume DuVair in *The Moral Philosophie of the Stoicks* (trans. Thomas James, 1598). For DuVair true honour is necessarily derived from virtue, and one's innate moral worth is significant, while glory, since it derives from others, not from one's own will, is worthless. Banquo cannot be said to go that far, but his detachment from reward at any cost is profound. The conviction of one's own moral integrity is a private form of honour which should not be confused with the relativistic view of honour as private conviction divorced from extra-personal moral codes defended by one speaker in Annibale Romei's *Courtiers Academie* (trans. John Kepers, 1598), p. 100, who claims that since honour is fame, the man of honour defends his cause even when convinced he is in the wrong. This relativistic view of honour is, to my mind, presented satirically by Romei, but Norman Council (*When Honour's at the Stake*, pp. 27-28) does not seem to think so.

[28] Pierre Charron, *De la Sagesse* [1601], I (Preface) p. xxxi (ed. Amaury Duval [Geneva: Slatkin Reprints, 1968]).

Montaigne suggests is that "true honour" (consisting in heart and will) apparent in the "Constancie[which] is valour, not of armes and legs, but of minde and courage".[29] Thus, the honour for which Banquo speaks is inextricable from virtue, and his words show him possessor of the prudence and fortitude[30] reproved by Lady Macbeth as cowardice, of the justice that is contrary to expediency, and of temperance which gives him a moderate attitude towards wealth and power[31] and prevents the excess of ambition which Sir Thomas Elyot calls "inordinate desire of sovereignty."[32] The man who possesses prudence, fortitude, justice and temperance (the cardinal virtues) is, according to Cicero, superior to Fortune[33]: this idea is a commonplace of English humanist writing: it is repeated by Sir Thomas Elyot in the passage just cited and is reflected in Lodowick Bryskett's statement (in the very year in which *Macbeth* may have been composed) that the natural man of virtuous endowments "is alwayes higher then his fortune, be it never so great, and be she never so contrary, she cannot overthrow him."[34] In his indifference to fortune and to expediency, in his adherence to virtue rather than to Machiavellian *virtù*, and in coupling his heroic virtue with prudence, Banquo here becomes an embodiment, as it were, of the qualities attributed to Macbeth by the Duncan party in Act I, Scene ii, and of the moral considerations ~~earlier~~ seen, especially in the soliloquies, as central to Macbeth's consciousness.

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[29] Essayes, I, vvv, p. 226.

[30] According to Waith, "noble courage is based on three things: striving for nobility, loving virtuous manners, and managing one's affairs with prudence, all of which are closely related to the desire for good name." Ideas of Greatness (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971), p. 23.

[31] Nicomachean Ethics, IV, iii. The cardinal virtues are discussed by Cicero, in de Officiis, I. xiii; see De Officiis/On Duties, trans. Harry A. Edinger (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1974), pp. 10ff.

[32] The Governor, III, xv, p. 197.

[33] De Officiis, I. xx.

The very wording of the expressions "bosom franchis'd" and "Allegiance clear" reinforces our impressions of Banquo as a reflection of the self that Macbeth has repudiated. The assertion of the will to keep the "*bosom* franchis'd" contrasts with the "new" Macbeth's intention to "hide what the *false heart* doth know" (I. vii. 83) and may be seen as anticipating the judgment of Lady Macbeth's lady-in-waiting, "I would not have *such a heart in my bosom* for the dignity of the whole body" (V. i. 52-53 [emphasis mine]). The "liberty, freedom and enfranchisement"[35] of soul that Banquo will not compromise shows his determination to avoid the ignobility of deceit to which Macbeth, with his mask-like face, is now dedicated. The contrast between Macbeth's craft and Banquo's openness may be judged in the light of Montaigne's statements that "a generous mind ought not to belie his thoughts but make shew of his inmost parts," that of all vices deceit most "witnesseth demisseness and baseness of heart [and that] it is a coward and servile humour, for a man to disguise and hide himselfe under a maske and not dare to shew himselfe as he is[, for] Artistotle thinkes it an office of magnanimitie . . . to judge and speake with all libertie."[36]

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[34] *A Discourse of Civill Life* (London: E. Blount, 1606), p. 232; STC # 3958.

[35] *Julius Caesar*, III. i. 81.

Banquo's free and open commitment to righteousness is coupled with "allegiance clear," a loyalty and fidelity that for Renaissance humanists is, as Watson puts it, "a logical concomitant and accessory of virtue."[37] "Allegiance" implies fealty, loyalty, duty: according to La Primaudaye it consists of all "that which bindeth the soule cheerfully and willingly without force or constraint to give to every one that which belongeth to him."[38] In other words, Banquo's "allegiance clear" is identical to the very "service" and "Loyalty" and "duties" which Macbeth in his first words to Duncan had declared to be their own reward (I. iv. 22-25). When Banquo uses the term "allegiance clear" he unwittingly echoes Macbeth's use of the term when, in the privacy of his own conscience, he had spoken of the monarch to whom he owes allegiance as one who is "clear in his great office" (I. vii. 18). Herein is further evidence of the nature of Banquo's role as reflector of Macbeth's customary judgment. In both instances "clear" means "free of guilt" or "innocent" --the sense in which Ariel uses the word when, in the central scene of The Tempest, he presents "three men of sin" with the opportunity for "clear life" (III. iii. 82). The association of this kind of claritas with the subject of virtue and honour is a commonplace in humanistic thought; it informs Du Vair's definition of "true honour" as "the glittering and beaming brightness of a good and vertuous action,"[39] just as it informs Macbeth's imagery when he speaks of "black" desires (I. iv. 51). But Macbeth betrays nothing of the nature and consequences of his choice of a self antithetical to that evoked by Banquo at this point. Hiding the false heart which beats with a manly resolution different in kind from Banquo's intrepidity, he bids his hearer "good repose" (line 29). In that phrase he unwittingly sums up the nature of the two concepts of manhood and honour evoked in the brief conversation. We are reminded of Banquo's prayer for a good repose to the angels who restrain "under-nature" and we will soon recognize that Macbeth's fidelity to "black and deep desires," the "cursed thoughts" that Banquo fears, will deprive him of "the season of all natures, sleep" (III. iv. 140). The good repose which Banquo, in turn, wishes him, "Thanks, Sir: the like to you" (l. 30), soon will be, as Macbeth discovers in the succeeding scene, as unreal to him as the harmonious life he had enjoyed before murdering his better self, his king and sleep.

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[36] Essayes, III. xiii. i, 81.

[37] Concept of Honor, p. 98.

[38] Pierre de la Primaudaye, French Academie, trans. T.B[owes] (London, 1586; rpt. Hildesheim and New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 1972), p. 88.

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[39] The Moral Philosophie of the Stoicks, p. 79.

The final movement of Act II, Scene ii begins when Macbeth dismisses his torch-bearing servant thus: "Go bid thy mistress, when my drink is ready,/She strike upon the bell. Get thee to bed" (ll. 31-32). These words are rich in suggestiveness, for Macbeth is now alone in the thick night whose darkness is unrelieved; the torchlight disappears and heaven's candles are all out. Light disappears and Banquo's symbolic voice no longer intrudes. The drink prepared by Lady Macbeth as sustenance for the murderer has in it, in the imaginative response of an attentive audience, components of the gall for which she has offered the milk in her woman's breasts. And "Get thee to bed" draws our attention to Macbeth's alienation from repose, so that, like the sailor threatened by the Witches in Act I, he promises to be one for whom "Sleep shall neither night nor day/ Hang upon his penthouse lid" (I. iii. 19-20). Thus the good-night greetings of Macbeth and Banquo are richly connotative lines, and they provide the immediate context for the "dagger" soliloquy:

Is this a dagger, which I see before me,
The handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch thee:--
I have thee not, and yet I see thee still.
Art thou not, fatal vision, sensible
To feeling, as to sight? or art thou but
A dagger of the mind, a false creation,
Proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain?
I see thee yet, in form as palpable
As this which now I draw.
Thou marshall'st me the way that I was going;
And such an instrument I was to use.--
Mine eyes are made the fools o' th' other senses,
Or else worth all the rest: I see thee still;
And on thy blade, and dudgeon, gouts of blood,
Which was not so before.--There's no such thing.
It is the bloody business which informs
Thus to mine eyes.
(ll. 33-49)

The perplexity caused in Macbeth by his vision of the dagger has its parallel in the puzzlement of critics in their commentary upon this soliloquy. This is an acknowledged puzzlement, for most of them implicitly agree with Walter Clyde Curry either as to the source of the dagger or as to its dramatic purpose. For Curry the dagger is "[most likely] an illusion the source of [which] is demonic" (or, more precisely, demonically disturbed bodily humours) and its function is to impel Macbeth to the fatal act.[40] Kenneth Muir, for example, seems to follow Curry when, in his most recent commentary on Macbeth, he speaks of the dagger as "an hallucination for which the powers of darkness are doubtless responsible;"[41] one might assume that evidence such as Curry's quoting Aquinas must be the basis for "doubtless," because no basis of argument is provided. As for the purpose of the fatal vision, Clifford Davidson says that it is to lead Macbeth to kill his kinsman and damn his own soul.[42] Paul A. Jorgensen sees the dagger as the "first clearly demonic response" to Macbeth's self-commitment to the service of Satan and tells us that the "obvious purpose" of the dagger is to "marshall him, as he moves in rapt manner, through the murder."[43] Indeed Jorgensen out-Curries Curry (who states that Lady Macbeth becomes demonically possessed) in the assertion that at the time of the regicide, Macbeth is not only possessed by the Witches but even in the service and control of a demon.[44] And Wilbur Sanders, who sees Macbeth during this soliloquy as "blundering round the stage snatching ridiculously at the phenomenal products of his own delirium and uttering lines as absurdly melodramatic as they are grotesque,"[45] claims that the visionary dagger is an hallucination which reveals to us the incipient insanity of the protagonist. For Matthew Proser the dagger is "another frightful hallucination" that at once indulges and provides a release from conscience and feeling and, thus, "serves its purpose" by drawing the hero "to the point of action while at the same time plunging him into his typical state of 'raptness'."[46]

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[40] Shakespeare's Philosophical Patterns (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press [1937], 1959), pp. 83-84.

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[41] Shakespeare's Tragic Sequence (London: Hutchinson University Library, 1972), p. 147.

[42] The Primrose Way, p. 12.

[43] Our Naked Frailities, pp. 64-65.

[44] Curry's assertion that Lady Macbeth is possessed is more persuasively supported by his source, Oesterrich, than by the play. He fails to see that the sleep-walking scene more obviously proves the failure rather than the success of her prayer for the stopping up of "th'access and passage to remorse." Jorgensen does not call in the same way on outside sources; instead, he interprets "rapt" to signify extra se raptus, the expression for a Pauline idea of ecstasy that in Shakespeare's day occasionally meant possession by witches. He does not find it necessary to offer further justification for his claim that Macbeth is witch-possessed and demonically controlled (see esp. pp. 64-66).

My suggestion that a certain furtive puzzlement may be discovered in the preceding responses to the mysterious weapon may seem injudicious until the soliloquy and its context are carefully examined. It must immediately be granted that these responses have a clear textual basis, a basis provided by Macbeth's own conclusions. For Macbeth the vision is an hallucination whose source is the disturbance of his brain by the "bloody business" and whose divinable purpose is to marshall him along his predetermined manly path. But why Macbeth's judgment can be accepted as unambivalent in this instance is a question that these critics have not asked. His recent judgment on the relationship between valour and manliness should perhaps invite a certain scepticism on our part as to the validity of all "truths" spoken by him, particularly those that may fail to reinforce the world view he has so recently made his be-all and end-all. The necessity of the scepticism mentioned would seem all the more essential to an understanding of the soliloquy were one to ask why Macbeth must dismiss the vision as nothing ("There's no such thing!") before he proceeds to the climax of his design. Surely that is a question to be asked. Furthermore, if the source of the vision is demonic and if the dagger can be said to serve its demonic purpose, it must be admitted to function in an oddly persuasive manner. First of all, that demonic excitement or incitement should prove a let to action--and obviously it does, for Macbeth seems momentarily checked: "thou marshall'st me the way that I was going;/And such an instrument I was to use" (emphasis mine)--seems illogical and improbable. It is not surely a demonic characteristic to present evil as repellent. Secondly, the paradox of quasi-preventive temptation--the infernal powers almost functioning as "merciful Powers"--would seem dramatically unnecessary; after all, Macbeth's mind is settled, his planning is complete, and his sureness of course has been articulated unambiguously at the end of Act I and demonstrated in the conversation with Banquo in this very scene. Thirdly, the image of the dagger changes; at first unstained, it reflects the potential for destructiveness, the courage requisite for the horrid deed; then, blood-smeared, it becomes an image of achieved guilt and, as such, a premonitory reflection of Macbeth's awareness that "all great Neptune's ocean" cannot wash the dead king's "blood/Clean from [his] hand" (II. ii. 59-60). Indeed it is in relationship to that image of guilt that the nature and the function of the dagger can be best discovered, and discovered to be demonic neither in origin nor function.

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[45] The Dramatist and the Received Idea (Cambridge: The University Press, 1968), p. 289.

[46] The Heroic Image, pp. 66-67.

Commentary upon this passage is informed by the tacit assumption that the insubstantial dagger seen by Macbeth is to be associated with the fantastic rather than the icastic function of the imagination--or, to use Coleridge's terminology, with fancy rather than imagination. That assumption is revealed in the critics' repeated use of the word "hallucination" rather than "vision" to refer to the dagger. Yet Renaissance discussion of the imagination allows for the applicability of the latter. Mazzoni's commentator Bulgarini, for example, had written in 1583 that "what the Greeks call fantasies we truly call visions, by which images of absent things are so presented in the mind that we seem to see them without our eyes and behold them present."[47] The use of the word "vision" would suggest the possibility of interpreting the imaginary dagger not only as an illusion based on nothing (or representation [mimesis] of what does not exist) but as the imaginative apprehension of the very idea or form of the crime and its attendant guilt. By evading this possibility of interpretation, one misses the significance of Macbeth's insistence that the dagger is false because it is impalpable. Were he to accept it as real, notwithstanding his inability to clutch it, he would be acknowledging it as a proof of the reality he dismissed as unreal, and so as a denial of the adequacy of the world view of the expedient self. If he can dismiss it as a "false creation,/Proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain" rather than accept it as something properly perceived by the ethical self which sees into the essence of things (through the eye of the poet's imagination), then it is a mere obstacle to be overcome by his denying its reality. The ethical self which penetrates to the very truth of Macbeth's situation and lucidly defines the moral implications of his desires and deeds is characterized by an imaginative grasp of truth which Lady Macbeth will valiantly dismiss as "sorriest fancies" (III. ii. 9) perceived with the naive and fearful "eye of childhood" (II. ii. 53). Indeed, Lady Macbeth's judgment on all matters pertaining to the higher reality of what occurs should be an indicator to commentators on Macbeth of how not to interpret events, whether visions or hallucinations; the "Sleep-walking Scene" attests to the fallibility of her earlier protestations to the hero. And it is notable that her attacks upon the visionary accuracy of her husband are explicitly attacks upon the poet and artist within him, and that her arguments are supported by appeals to that manly fearlessness whose "noble strength" is inimical to what she terms brainsick thinking (II. ii. 44-45). To deny the reality of Duncan's death as the horror Macbeth recognizes it to be, she utters sentences that reveal her contempt for art as a baseless fabric of illusion:

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[47] Alcune considerazioni sopra 'l discorso di M. Giacopo Mazzoni, quoted by Hathaway, The Age of Criticism, p. 383.

> The sleeping and the dead,
> Are but as pictures; 'tis the eye of childhood
> That fears a painted devil.
> (II. ii. 52-54; emphasis mine.)

To deny the reality of what terrorizes Macbeth in his encounter with the ghost of Banquo (though the reality of both ghost and guilt are hidden from her now) she betrays the same negative view of art--both pictorial and narrative--by associating her husband's insight (to her, his unmanliness) with the lie of mimetic illusion and the nonsense of a winter's tale:

> O proper stuff!
> This is the very painting of your fear:
> This is the air-drawn dagger, which, you said,
> Led you to Duncan. O! these flaws and starts
> (Impostors to true fear), would well become
> A woman's story at a winter's fire
> Authoris'd by her grandam.
> (III. iv. 59-65; emphasis mine)

Lady Macbeth's later diagnosis of the illness of Macbeth's vision should alert us to the need to view the dagger vision as something perceived by the eye of his better self--which, to her, *is* "the eye of childhood"--especially when we have ample grounds in Act I for understanding that her expression refers to the imaginative grasp of truths and the display of feeling conformable to what Macbeth spoke of as "all that may become a man."

That the soliloquy involves a struggle of self with self is suggested in the paralysis induced in Macbeth by the sight of the dagger (here once again "function is smothered in surmise," as the idea of murder reveals its terrifying reality) and in the struggle for release from that paralysis by an affirmation of the fancifulness, the nothingness --the non-thingness--of the vision. The struggle is evident even in the initial question, which does not ask whether what is perceived is or is not *a dagger* but whether what is perceived may or may not *be*. "Come, let me clutch thee" is, then, the utterance of that self which would define all reality in terms of what is palpable. For that reason it may be seen as an attempt to interpret the vision as temptation rather than as its opposite, that is, as corroboration of the perverse will rather than cautionary emanation of an ethical awareness undimmed by the moral obscurity Macbeth so desires. The effort, of course, is vain; the vision persists in its frustrating impalpability, as if insisting on its inescapable reality, and soon it takes on those "gouts of blood" that, in the wider view of Act II, function as an image of the blood-guiltiness that stigmatically marks the assassin's hands. Thus the dagger presents to Macbeth a premonition and prejudgment of his guilt, functioning as a "fatal vision" (l. 36) both of the crime and the punishment.

Macbeth's inquiry into the nature of the dagger's reality is biased, because the alternatives considered in the second question of the soliloquy are weighted in favour of his newly-assumed world view:

> Art thou not, fatal vision, sensible
> To feeling, as to sight? or art thou but
> A dagger of the mind, a false creation,
> Proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain?

His first tendency is to decide that if the vision is not sensible to feeling as to sight then it must be a false creation. This suggests a bias of will, for to conclude that "a dagger of the mind" is necessarily "a false creation" is to take a logical step that is only valid if there is no distinction between intellective imagination and delusive fancy; that "the heat-oppressed brain" is here associated with deceptive fantasy is undeniable, and the association is reinforced by Lady Macbeth's later derision of his worthless fancy. "Thou marshall'st me the way that I was going" shows Macbeth's dubious desire to have it both ways: the vision is at once a false creation and an encouragement to the self that so conceives it to persevere to the end of his valiant course. This inconsistency in logic leads to an utterance that allows for the falsity of that logic, "Mine eyes are made the fools o' th' other sense,/Or else worth all the rest". Herein the struggle with the ethical self continues, for "worth all the rest" is ambiguous, referring to the effectiveness of the dagger as an image of achieved ambition and to its effectiveness as image of a reality that _is_, but that is not palpable. If Macbeth is right in defining the nothingness of the vision by comparing it to the palpable dagger he draws, then his eyes are fools and Lady Macbeth will be right in her assertion, "A _foolish_ thing to say a sorry sight" (II. ii. 21), for his foolish eyes are indistinguishable from the eye of childhood she speaks of in the same context. But if Macbeth is wrong, then despite all Lady Macbeth's later gainsaying, the eyes that perceive the reality of the imaginary dagger now--the same eyes that dare not look upon the dead Duncan in the next scene--are eyes that are at one with the thinking that makes Macbeth afraid to contemplate his manly feat: "I am afraid to think what I have done;/Look on't again I dare not" (II. ii. 50-51).

The logic of "Mine eyes are made the fools o' th' other senses,/Or else worth all the rest" is proved fallacious when the sentence is examined in the perspective of the play as a whole, especially in the perspective provided by Shakespeare's careful use of what might be called dramatic synaesthesia. In a play in which night is *thick*, air is *filthy* and knives *see* rather than feel the wounds they make, it is appropriate that the hero fear lest merely tactile stones *prate* and hope that the "sure and firm-set earth" be *deaf*. It is also as significant as it is appropriate that sight and other senses do not prove each other fools but, rather, validate each others' perceptions. The senses of hearing and of touch that combine to reveal and pass judgment upon Macbeth's guilt approve the wisdom of the eye that recognizes the reality of what the will would term "nothing." The aural sense that appals Macbeth as he learns that he shall sleep no more and the tactile sense that gives to blood the ability to smear indelibly prove the eye no fool, and work counter to the wished-for moral anaesthesia revealed in "[Let] the eye wink at the hand." And when "Amen" *sticks* in the murderer's throat, not only is its silence eloquent but the very tangibility of the unutterable word becomes a reinforcement of horrified sight. Indeed when, later in the play, Macbeth will have "almost forgot the *taste* of fears" (V. v. 9), it will be that, having "supp'd full with horrors," he will almost have succeeded in letting dire will blind the eye of moral awareness. And "almost" is significant, for Macbeth's tragic discovery is intrinsically linked to the inescapability of the insight against which he continually struggles and to the ultimate indestructibility of that reality he rejects as meaningless.

That the success of Macbeth in dismissing the reality of the dagger as symbol of his intended crime is only partial and, therefore, capable only of that frustrating success accorded to "vaulting Ambition," is revealed in the second half of the soliloquy that precedes the death of Duncan:

> Now o'er the one half-world
> Nature seems dead, and wicked dreams abuse
> The curtain'd sleep: Witchcraft celebrates
> Pale Hecate's off'rings; and wither'd Murther,
> Alarum'd by his sentinel, the wolf,
> Whose howl's his watch, thus, with his stealthy pace,
> With Tarquin's ravishing strides, towards his design
> Moves like a ghost.--Thou sure and firm-set earth,
> Hear not my steps, which way they walk, for fear
> Thy very stones prate of my where-about,
> And take the present horror from the time,
> Which now suits with it.--Whiles I threat, he lives:
> Words to the heat of deeds too cold breath gives.
> *[A bell rings]*
> I go and it is done: the bell invites me.
> Hear it not, Duncan; for it is a knell
> That summons thee to Heaven, or to Hell.

In those lines, the imagination that discovers the identity of "courageous" Macbeth with the Morality figure "Murther" is a faculty that pictures the criminal in one sense as a parodic emblem of the Macbeth whose military greatness won him the promise of a future "full of growing." In place of growth we find the image of withering; in place of openness we find stealth; and in "alarm'd", "sentinel", "watch" and "pace" we discover images that demand, as it were, a more worthy martial context and, thus, offer a suggestion of soldierliness that is without virtue. That lack of virtue is further suggested by the wolf image, by means of which, as Ribner suggests, "Macbeth allies himself with the destroyer of the innocent lamb, symbol of God."[48] Furthermore, when Murther's pace, by a sudden metamorphosis, becomes the stride of the ravisher Tarquin, Macbeth's imagination has discovered a powerful emblem of his own rape of innocence, The manliness of Tarquin is an analogue for Macbeth's present manly preparedness and by an irony implicit in the analogy but not recognized by Macbeth the ruined kingship that results from the Roman tyrant's dastardly deed of evil is an image of the Scottish tyrant's frustrated reign.[49] Macbeth's recognition is more complex still, for the acknowledgement that "Nature seems dead" in the one half-world of darkness he now inhabits, and that symbolizes his dread intent, has as corollary the knowledge that Nature seems not, and is not, dead in the other half-world which, because it sees the beauty of the sun, may be recognized as symbol of his better self.

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[48] Patterns in Shakespearean Tragedy, p. 166.

[49] Ruth Nevo, Tragic Form in Shakespeare (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1973), p. 233 ff. provides an interesting discussion of the phallic implications of the visionary dagger. For her, in the transformation of Murther to Tarquin, Macbeth's "design" becomes the subject of erotic attention, and murder presents itself as rape. She does not discuss the Macbeth-Tarquin parallel in relation to the

The concept of Nature informing these lines is different from the pessimistic idea of nature adhered to by Shakespeare's naturalists. Edmund's "Nature" in *Lear* or what Lady Macbeth called "Nature's mischief," (I. v. 50) and what the bleeding Captain called "the multiplying villainies of nature" are not part of Macbeth's "Nature" but, rather phenomena that depend for their existence on Nature's death. Macbeth's "Nature", then, is the ideal order of creation, and his intended action is, consequently, a violation of that perfect order: once again he deliberately chooses the "foul" as his "fair." Thus, while Macbeth surrounds himself with images of horror, in what Emrys Jones tells us is an attempt "to create an unnaturally 'dead' environment which will suit with 'the present horror of the time',"[50] we can

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idea of frustrated kingship. The significance of Tarquin's role in *The Rape of Lucrece* and its pertinence to our understanding of *Macbeth's* tragedy is discussed at length by Rolf Soellner in chapter 17 of his *Shakespeare's Patterns of Self-Knowledge*([Columbus]: Ohio State University Press, 1972) and briefly by Kenneth Muir in the New Arden edition of *Macbeth*, Appendix D, p. 198.

[50] *Scenic Form in Shakespeare* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), p. 212.

recognize that, though Macbeth's imagination in providing these images functions ethically, his will is anchored to expediency, finding in the same images a psychological spur that encourages an o'er leaping of their didactic suggestiveness. Indeed, the triumph of will over imaginative insight, which results in the suppression of moral feeling in the protagonist, is dramatized in the appeal to the firm-set earth to remain deaf to the higher reality of the deed now to be done.

Macbeth's dread lest the earth proclaim that higher reality (that the stones might prate) is similar to his wife's wish that heaven fail to peep through the blanket of the dark. The triumph of will on Macbeth's part here, like the triumph of determination on her part earlier, involves an implicit confession of the possibility of failure--failure to suppress ethical truth. It is this confession, half-acknowledged though it be, that allows the audience and the reader to find the final lines of the soliloquy poignant as well as horrifying. We can recognize a promise of future failure in "I go, and it is done." "It is done" may be simply a translation of consummatum est; if so, the expression ironically contrasts Macbeth's murderous act with Christ's self-sacrifice on Calvary, and invests the deed with suggestions of sacrilege. But "it is done" is clearly an echo of "If it were done, when 'tis done," bringing with it echoes of the truths contemplated in that soliloquy. And this is significant, because those truths have, even in the soliloquy now ending, shown themselves incapable of being equivocated into nothingness. Furthermore in "it is done" the pronoun is vague enough to be ambiguous to the audience, even though we know that Macbeth uses "it" to refer to regicide. Because of what the crime implies, we can recognize "it is done" to signify also Macbeth's becoming "the deed's creature,"[51] that is to his becoming entangled in consequences whose reality he has never denied. In the audience's certainty that the willed blindness manifested in "it is done" cannot prevail lies the pathos and poignancy.

The pattern of Macbeth's relationship with time in the period between his encounter with the Witches and the murder of Duncan is epitomized in an expression used by Lady Macbeth when first she greets her husband: "I feel now/ The future in the instant" (I. v. 57-58). That pattern of experience reaches its climax in the present scene, especially in the anticipatory quality of the language used by the hero. In Macbeth's reference to the as yet future murder as the "present horror," in the tense of "it is done" and in his use of "knell" with reference to the royal corpse of a still living being, Macbeth feelingly realizes the future in the instant. But this disorderly forcing of time's ordered processes soon brings in its revenges. The pattern that reaches its climax now is soon to be reversed, and the reversal of the pattern is central to the tragic experience of the protagonist. It is also essential to the pathetic appeal of Lady Macbeth's sleep-walking utterances. From the moment in which the hero utters "I go, and it is done" the pattern of his relationship with time will no longer be based on the anticipatory perception of the future in the moment; henceforth, it will be based on the perception that the present is permeated with rooted sorrows which cannot be plucked from memory. However much Macbeth may concentrate on his relationship with the future, however much he may agonize over his "unlineal hand," however much he may strive to eradicate the persons of Banquo, Macduff and their progeny, he will, essentially, be engaged in a struggle to distance the reality of past failure, the failure to eradicate the self that foresaw the moral waste of the bloody deed. Banquo and Macduff will function, symbolically, as voices articulating the truth he rejected and, thus, as the "discomfortable" agents of memory. Indeed, when at the end of the play Macbeth wistfully asks his wife's doctor why there is no "sweet oblivious antidote" that can "cleanse the stuff'd bosom of that perilous stuff/Which weighs upon the heart" (V. ii. 43-44), it is evident that the oblivion in question is his need too. The context makes that clear: Macbeth puts the question to the physician immediately following the "yellow leaf" soliloquy (V. iii. 20-28), during which he remembered such good things of day, the joys of allegiance clear, "honour, love, obedience troops of friends," as he, by the necessary consequences of an unnatural choice, "cannot look to have."

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[51] Thomas Middleton and William Rowley, The Changeling, III.iv.138. Line reference is to George Walton Williams' edition of the play in the Regents Renaissance Drama Series (Lincoln, Neb.: University of Nebraska Press, 1966).

Macbeth's relationship with time has been interestingly discussed by Francis Berry, who illustrates how this theme is reflected in the tensions of grammatical mood in the play.[52] The characteristic tense of the play, he says, is the future indicative, while the characteristic tense of the protagonist, especially in the "If it were done" and other soliloquies, is the subjunctive. Thus the grammar of the play reflects the clash between commitment to the future facts, which characterizes the plot, and a tendency to dwell on future (and, I might add, timeless) possibilities, which characterizes the action. Berry shows how Macbeth's desire to have the crown, without having to commit the will to doing the deed necessary for attaining the crown--thus, to enjoy the accomplishment, without incurring moral responsibility--is appropriately reflected in the subjunctive quality of his key verbs in speeches of reflection. He claims, further, that the changed relationship of Macbeth with time is indicated in Act III, Scene i: "possible and Subjunctive has [already] been enacted, [and] has come into the order of time that is now Past" (p. 55). Henceforth, the freedom from guilt belongs to the might-have-been, and the past pursues Macbeth even while the future closes in upon him, anticipates the dread exploits with which he tries to "pre-vent" it (p. 57) as it promises to make the Indicative facts of Banquo's dynasty and so on no longer future but present. I suggest that what Berry demonstrates in his analysis of the "Poetic Dramatic Grammar" (p. 55) of the play is observable too on the level of characterization. Banquo's function as "agent of memory" is, as I have demonstrated, clearly established in the opening scene of the second Act. It will be again evident in the drama of the announcement of regicide in Act II, Scene iii, when his voice argues against the inadequate utterances of Lady Macbeth, the would-be vanquisher of the irrepressible past, Banquo's role as agent of memory, or as echo of the better self which Macbeth has rejected, is suggested in Shakespeare's use of psychomachic scenes in Act II.

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[52] Poet's Grammar: Person, Time, and Mood in Poetry (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958), pp. 48-57. Further references to this text are provided in parentheses following quotations.

The fundamental principle of dramatic organization in each of the first three scenes of Act II is that of the psychomachia, the struggle between self and self within the mind, or the struggle between virtue and vice within the soul, of the protagonist. In Scene i, as we have seen, Banquo appears first; in his words before Macbeth arrives on the stage and in the brief duologue that ensues, he functions as spokesman for the world view, the ethical principles, and the language earlier eschewed by Macbeth. In Scene ii, Shakespeare uses the same dramatic method, this time placing Lady Macbeth alone on the stage, and using her throughout the scene as spokesman for all that is antithetical to what Banquo represented immediately beforehand, and as dramatic balance to the utterances and actions of Macbeth. She argues against the affirmations of the conscience of the hero as we see him awakened to a full awareness of the metaphysical repercussions of his crime. In Scene iii, where Macbeth appears again self-possessed and ruthless in his Machiavellian guile, Shakespeare gradually crowds his stage with foils, each of whom functions as a reflector of one of the conflicting realities within the hero. The first to appear is the inebriated Porter, and his role is that of the comic, common-man antithesis of Macbeth's heroic achiever. For the audience this drunkenness is a parody of Macbeth's raptness, his Morality role-playing an appropriate moral judgment upon Macbeth's mask-wearing, and his words an apt comment upon the myopia of Macbeth's expediency. Next enters Macduff who, though his role in Act II is brief, establishes himself as a major figure by becoming the embodied voice of outraged Nature in denouncing the "business" as "horror". Next enters Lady Macbeth, and, on her heels, Banquo, and together they mirror the extremes of response within the hero. Lastly Duncan's sons, Malcolm and Donalbain, join the chorus of response and, as they discuss in whispers the dangers hidden behind the mask of deception, they reflect Macbeth's own awareness of what the false face is designed to hide. When Malcolm voices the proverbial wisdom inspired in him by the lurking dangers of the moment, his generalized comment applies with unwitting cogency to the central problem of Macbeth; "To show an unfelt sorrow is an office / Which the false man does easy" (II. iv. 137) ironically identifies the problem of false manhood. The relevance of these words to Macbeth's anarchic individualism subtly but clearly establishes the choric function of Malcolm in this scene.

Each of the characters appearing in Act II, Scene iii serves as a foil to the protagonist. Their various reactions to the crime are so orchestrated that the sum of their utterances significantly reflects Macbeth's profoundest thoughts in the preceding scenes, especially in the soliloquies. We are prepared for this by the glaring pattern of comic echoes provided by the besotted Porter, who leaves the stage before the murder is discovered. The pertinence of his play-acting as "Porter of Hell Gate" (l. 2) in a context in which Macbeth has seen his own role as that of "Murther" (II. i. 52) leads the audience to the recognition that Inverness is now "Hell" and that those who knock upon the gate are, eventually if not immediately, the harrowers of this Scottish inferno.[53] It is not surprising, then, that the Porter's imagined farmer, "who hang'd himself on th' expectation of plenty" (l. 5) should seem a figure of that "worthiest cousin" to whom Duncan promised fulness of growth (I. iv. 14, 28-29), nor that the time-server who is told to "have napkins enow about [him]" should remind us of Macbeth's concern with time and chance and with wearing "Golden opinions" (I. vii. 33), nor that the equivocator "that could swear in both the scales against either scale", and commit "treason enough for God's sake, yet could not equivocate to heaven" (ll. 9-12) should reflect Macbeth's "If good/If ill" moral balancing act and echo the expedient choice and willed self-deceit of the protagonist; his damnation grows from a purposefulness that parallels the "manly" determination by which Macbeth damned his humanity. There is a crescendo of aptness about the Porter's levity that culminates in the last sentences of his exchange with Macduff:

> Macduff. I believe drink gave thee the lie last night.
>
> Porter. That it did, Sir, i' the very throat of me:
> but I requited him for his lie; and (I think)
> being too strong for him, though he took up
> my legs some-time, yet I made a shift to
> cast him.
>
> (ll. 28-32)

The discussion of the effects of drink coincides with Macbeth's appearance upon the stage,[54] and with Macbeth's appearance upon the stage,[54] and the parallel between the "lie in the very throat" idea and Macbeth's recent experience of the constriction caused by an "'Amen'[which] stuck in [his] throat" (II. ii. 31-32) alerts us to the status of the Porter's words as comic analogue for Macbeth's own experience. It is an analogue which functions in an unexpected manner, however, as is evident upon close analysis. Since alcohol has been closely associated with the act of murder both by Lady Macbeth and Macbeth himself--she relying on her possets as antidote to humane instincts, he referring to the moment of regicide as the moment when his drink is ready--we might expect that "drink" in the present context is an analogue for the manliness that made the murder possible. The parallel between Macbeth's image of his walking towards Duncan's chamber "with Tarquin's ravishing strides" (II. i. 55) and the Porter's remarks on the relationship between inebriation and lechery (II. iii. 29ff) is the signal for our understanding that "drink" here is an analogue for Macbeth's soldierly daring in the full ambivalence of its nature from the moment of temptation to the doing of the deed: "drink" which provokes desire and takes away performance is similar in nature to the valour that at once dares to release itself from loyalty and wishes to remain tied to virtue. It is an "equivocator" that gives the lie (11. 35-36), unmanning its victim while leading him to believe it increases his manliness. Soldierly daring, like drink, makes and mars Macbeth--makes the treacherous, murderous expedient self, and mars the better self whose concept of manhood embraces an ideal of virtuous action. But in the speech which coincides with Macbeth's entrance "drink" has become an analogue for Macbeth's ethical self. What now corresponds to the expedient self is the Porter's will to require drink "for his lie." The contest between drink and will, which ends in the will's apparent triumph, is similar to the contest between the truth of Macbeth's awareness in Act II, Scene ii and the contrary truths of fact championed by Lady Macbeth as reflector of that part of him that dared to accept her reality as his. Macbeth has "made a shift to cast" his better self, and has apparently been successful, for now he enters the action that centres on the discovery of the murder with great confidence in his Machiavellian guile. Thus the Porter's words prepare us for the role played by Macbeth in the scene. The success of his role-playing is immediately suggested by the emphasis upon "noble Sir" and "worthy Thane" (my emphasis) in Macduff's and Lenox's greeting. Duncan and his attendants had spoken of Macbeth to the self-same tune and words in Act I, Scene ii. Macbeth's alienation from noble worth is no more expected now than it was then. The juxtaposition of this irony with the ironic suggestiveness of the Porter's final remarks prepares the audience for the nature of Macbeth's public role in the rest of the scene. It suggests how precisely Macbeth has responded to the admonition "Be not lost/So poorly in your thoughts" (II. ii. 70-71) and, thus, reveals the shape of things to come.

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[53] This aspect of the play is extensively treated in Glynne Wickham's "Hell-Castle and its Door-Keeper," Shakespeare Survey, 19 (1966), 68-74.

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[54] Immediately after the Porter's last line (l. 42), Macduff inquires "Is thy master stirring?" but notices Macbeth's approach before the Porter can reply. The stage direction would seem to suggest that Macbeth enter while the question is being asked. Yet, if one considers that, on the Jacobean stage, the actor playing Macbeth would need a few seconds to reach centre-stage, and especially when one notes the ironic import of the "lie in the throat" speech, it seems likely that Shakespeare designed Macbeth's arrival to coincide with the speech in question.

The pertinence of the Porter's rambling comedy to the protagonist's most secret concerns prepares the audience, as has earlier been suggested, to recognize the choric quality of the utterance of other _dramatis personae_ soon to crowd the stage. The brief exchange between Macduff and Macbeth, with their mutual protestations of the joys of selfless service, echoes Macbeth's first words to Duncan: the idea of "joyful trouble," of "the labour we delight in" and of insisting on performing one's "limited service" (ll. 49-53) recalls the values appealed to by Duncan's "worthiest cousin" when, shielding the mind's construction with the face and words of the devoted subject, he attested to the self-sufficiency of "service," "loyalty" and "duties" of the faithful subject (I. iv. 22-27). In juxtaposition with this piece of dialogue we find the amazed young Lenox's description of the night whose darkness still pervades the courtyard:

> The night has been unruly: where we lay,
> Our chimneys were blown down; and, as they say,
> Lamentings heard i' th' air; strange screams of death,
> And, prophesyings with accents terrible
> Of dire combustion, and confus'd events,
> New hatch'd to th' woeful time, the obscure bird
> Clamour'd the livelong night: some say, the earth
> Was feverous, and did shake.
>
> (ll. 55-62)

The juxtaposition of an echo of the virtues and values rejected by Macbeth with a word-picture of the confusion foreseen by him as a consequence of his decision-making constitutes a quasi-choric, dramatic affirmation of truth apprehended by the self that scrutinized "suggestion" in the light of moral insight which revealed that the "supernatural soliciting" of the witches "cannot be good" (I. iii. 130-31). The confused cosmos so reacts that it blows the deed in every eye. The earth-quake that represents Nature's recoil from Macbeth's "feat" utters what the stones might have cried out. And from Lenox's description of the unruly night the audience learns that the temple-haunting martlet, symbol of Macbeth's honorable past, is replaced by the clamouring "obscure bird," which becomes the symbol of Macbeth's life henceforth.

Macduff too clamours, once he has discovered the corpse of murdered Duncan, and there is an oracular quality in his pronouncements. To describe this effect as choric in function is to suggest that Shakespeare designs Macduff's role in Act II, Scene iii as a public voice that aptly reflects Macbeth's moral insight and, in this way, affirmatively judges the probity associated therewith, while damning the duplicity that replaced it. Macduff's language is the language rejected as valid when Macbeth embraced his wife's savage concept of manliness. The ethical implications of his utterances are the implications of Macbeth's wisdom in refusing to proceed with his regicidal design. The reality appealed to by Macduff is the reality of timeless ideas, not of physical facts confined in time and space. Even the imagery of painting used by him implies a negative judgment on Lady Macbeth's view of art and, thus, indirectly affirms the truth of Macbeth's visionary imagination. Macduff is the voice of Nature and of the supernatural, for he is at one with the imagined "Cherubins, hors'd upon the sightless couriers of the air" in proclaiming the immorality of the outrage. He is the knight of righteousness, whose "O horror! horror! horror!" (II. iii. 64) defines what is done, but by no means done with, not as "this night's great business" but as "horrid deed". His choice of image in "Most sacrilegious Murther hath broke ope/The Lord's anointed Temple" (ll. 68-69) condemns the assassin in the same imaginative terms as Macbeth had viewed the role of "wither'd Murther" (II. i. 52) designing the death of one whose royal virtues are angelic (I. vii. 18-20). And when Macduff invites his hearers, Macbeth and Lenox, to "destroy [their] sight/With a new Gorgon" (ll. 72-73) and then to speak what they have seen (ll. 72-74), he is, on the one hand, approving the insight that made Macbeth unwilling to think what he had done and fear to look again upon it (II. ii. 50-51) and, on the other, insisting that words again bear a direct relationship to the truth perceived--thus, rejecting both the ploy of the equivocator and the unHamletian willingness of Macbeth to overstep words altogether.

When Macduff turns to arouse Banquo and Duncan's sons to an awareness of what has occurred, he speaks of the corpse of the murdered king as the Idea of death itself. Thus he emphasizes the transcendent reality of what Macbeth, in his choice of the physical as the realm of self-realization, wills to deny. With a pertinence that befits the oracular voice, he proclaims the reality of the world of ideas in words that undermine the adequacy of Lady Macbeth's view of art, the view that debases the products of the imagination as the toys of lying fantasy rather than the reflections of the "golden world" of higher truth. To her "the sleeping, and the dead,/Are but as pictures," and the picture of "a painted devil" (II. ii. 53-54) is an empty and essentially innocuous device. To Macduff sleep too is a picture, the "counterfeit" of death (II. iii. 77), but a valid image of an idea whose reality cannot be gainsaid. Hence, his metaphorical outcry, "Destroy your sight/With a new Gorgon" (II. iii. 72-73), contradicts the assumptions that underlay Lady Macbeth's dismissal of what the "eye of childhood" takes for real. Macduff's metaphor contains a truth larger than her world of facts, and affirms the meaningful quality of what the child's eye, or the eye of the imagination, perceives. The "destroy your sight" idea, furthermore, reflects fairly precisely Macbeth's idea of how his bloody hands pluck out his eyes and, thus, mirrors the hero's confrontation with the reality of his guilt on the level of the non-physical. Macduff's metaphor, then, provides an implicit commentary on Macbeth's willed self-deception and on the futility of the purposefulness with which he strives to alienate his own imaginative truths. It is in this way that Macduff's role may be termed choric.

The dramatic echoing of the terms of contrary languages with which Macbeth argued the pros and cons of regicide is emphasized by the juxtaposition of Macduff's and Lady Macbeth's reaction to the death of Duncan:

> Macduff. As from your graves rise up, and walk like sprites,
> To countenance *this horror*!
>
> *Enter Lady Macbeth*
>
> *Lady Macbeth*. What's *the business*,
> That such a hideous trumpet calls to parley
> The sleepers of the house? speak, speak!
>
> (II. iii. 80-83; emphasis mine)

The juxtaposition in a single line of "horror" and "business" resumes the battle of words that preceded the murder, and the phrase "*hideous* trumpet" (my emphasis) contains what the theatre-audience can interpret as an implicit judgment on

Macduff's words. Lady Macbeth may not recognize the implication because she may not hear Macduff's address. Macduff himself cannot recognize the implication, because he is as yet too uninformed to do so. But the audience, knowing that the ringing bell has been the only instrumental clarion-cry to arouse the household,[55] will understand "hideous trumpet" to refer to Macduff's voice. "Hideous" then, by a refined dramatic irony, reflects Lady Macbeth's innate opposition to that voice and to what it signifies, even though her primary intention is to affect innocent bewilderment. Macduff is a trumpet that blares forth an interpretation of the killing of Duncan that is inimical to the interpretation advocated by her in the preceding scene. Thus, through the choice of words with which Lady Macbeth hides her knowledge, Shakespeare subtly reinforces the suggestion of a oneness between Macduff and the "angels trumpet-tongu'd" of Act I, Scene vii. This suggestiveness gives added meaning to Lady Macbeth's extension of military imagery in the expression " . . . call to parley/The sleepers of the house." The connotations of "trumpet" extend to the "call to parley" metaphor: the sleepers are being rallied by Macduff's voice to join the forces of virtue, whose spokesman he is, and to engage in a struggle against treachery, which is at the same time a war of words. He who defined the murder of Duncan as a "horror" which is ineffable--"Tongue nor heart cannot conceive, nor name thee!" (II. iii. 65)--represents a point of view and a mode of expression antithetical to the judgment and language of her who suggested that the deed "must not be thought of after these ways," who considered it "a foolish thing" to conceive of "the new Gorgon" as a "sorry sight," and who mocked the appalled heart that could so conceive or think it as shamefully unmanly--"I shame/To wear a heart so white" (II. ii. 63-64). By the connotations of Lady Macbeth's introductory lines in Act II, Scene iii, therefore, the audience can comprehend that those who rally to Macduff's side here rally to the defense of the language that supports the "hideous truths" trumpeted forth by him, and are to war against those words that support the reassuring and expedient truths championed by this wilful Lady and her tragic pupil.

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[55] The stage-direction, "Bell rings" (l. 81) answers Macduff's command, "Ring alarum-bell" (l. 75). There is no indication that a trumpet should complement the bell's sound.

The position of Lady Macbeth as symbol of the language ethics and morality of Macbeth's new manliness gives to her response to the news of Duncan's death the status of commentary on the inadequacy of what she represents. When Macduff utters "Our royal master's murther'd!" the contrast between her reaction and Banquo's draws attention to the banality of her feeble empiricism and to the way in which the cosmic consequences of the crime mock her attitude.

"Woe, alas!/What! in our house?" (ll. 87-88) emphasizes the unimaginative nature of the limited, local, amoral view of the deed which she has constantly supported, and Banquo's insightful "Too cruel anywhere" (l. 88) condemns the myopia that afflicts her spirit by attesting to the timeless, universal evil at the core of what has occurred. Banquo's and Macduff's voices are at one, and thus Banquo's role as complement to the values invested in Macduff is suggested. Hence, when Banquo takes centre stage to invite all to "question this most bloody piece of work,/To know it further" (ll. 128-29), he may be seen as fulfilling his Christian-soldier role established in Act II, Scene i and establishing his role as ally to Macduff in the war of truths. Banquo's purpose is to "question" and "know" and fight against "pretence" (l. 131). Determining to stand "In the great hand of God" (l. 130) he commits himself to the affirmation of truths that Lady Macbeth--the futility of her world now symbolized in her fainting (ll. 125-26)--finds hideous. The contrast between Banquo's articulateness and Lady Macbeth's silence, between his energy and her inertness, constitutes a dramatic statement on the relative strengths of the values they represent and on the nature of the respective absolutistic and relativistic concepts of truth to which they are dedicated. This dramatic statement is the theatrical climax of a complex of choric effects used so deftly in the whole scene. It is a statement that echoes the contrast between Macbeth's ethical awareness and his unethical decisiveness at key moments in Acts I and II, a statement whose validity will be echoed by the later action of the drama. Its relationship with subsequent action is indicated by Macbeth's final words in this scene. In reply to Banquo's commitment to discovering the true nature of undivulged, treasonous malice, Macbeth states, "Let's briefly put on manly readiness,/And meet i' th' hall together" (ll. 133-39). While these words are attuned to Banquo's assertion of the need of all present to hide the "naked frailties . . ./That suffer in exposure" (ll. 126-27), it is to be noted that Macbeth's voice is dissociated from the chorus of those assenting to the whole of Banquo's address.[56] Thus he is dissociated from the sentiments of those who propose to stand in the hand of God, and the dissociation lends all the more emphasis to his commitment to "manly readiness." What the expression means to the audience on the stage and what it means to the theatre audience signals the constancy of Macbeth in determined fidelity to his newly-adopted language. "Manly" is used with the ingenuity of the practised equivocator: to his hearers it represents a reinforcement of Banquo's appeal for responsible and moral action; to Macbeth himself, insofar as it indicates his deceptive intentions, it is a word whose significance is univocal, for the manly readiness that he is to show has already been demonstrated in the gruesome butchery of Duncan's drugged grooms.

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[56] Macduff is first to reply, with his "So do I"; then the rest [S.D. All] answer "So all!" Then Macbeth's statement follows immediately. It would seem that he, like Macduff, does not join in the general cry of affirmation. The separate replies of the two men emphasizes the contrast between them.

The same equivocal ingenuity informs Macbeth's apology for his summary execution of the chamberlains, whose apparent guilt he exploits. The assertions and rhetorical questions that make up the explanation are the linguistic equivalent of the false face which hides his true feelings:

> Who can be wise, amaz'd, temperate and furious,
> Loyal and neutral, in a moment? No man:
> Th' expedition of my violent love
> Outrun the pauser, reason.--Here lay Duncan,
> His silver skin lac'd with his golden blood;
> And his gash'd stabs look'd like a breach in nature
> For ruin's wasteful entrance: there, the murtherers
> Steep'd in the colours of their trade, their daggers
> Unmannerly breech'd with gore. Who could refrain,
> That had a heart to love, and in that heart
> Courage, to make's love known?
> (ll. 108-118)

Macbeth, the artist, here paints his speaking picture of the occasion and motivation of his action: "Here lay Duncan, . . . there, the murtherers, . . . who could refrain?" Subtly suggesting to the minds of his hearers the golden opinions in which they dressed him recently, he explains his action as one of loyal zeal, an action that is a feat of arms similar in kind and in motivation to the actions of valour's furious minion in the process of memorizing another Golgotha. His zeal plays Coriolanus, as it were, among the cloven

Volsces, while reason hesitates without the gates. The apology rests upon the assumption that the "expedition" of warlike love, the intuitive action of selfless love interfused with selfless courage, will be accepted as more proper to the speaker than the slow deliberative sagacity of those that are not men of action. The speech is a triumph of imaginative hypocritical invention. Its aftermath, Lady Macbeth's fainting, underlines its significance as a measure of Macbeth's self-dedication to evil.

Lady Macbeth's failure to become a fiend-like queen, to have the "murthering ministers take her milk for gall," is suggested by her fainting fit (or trick); her husband's success in unequivocal resolution is signaled by the news of the new murders and the mode of his apology. His initial question and the answer he provides depend upon the knowledge that his wife alone among his hearers can understand his use of words: "Who can be wise, amaz'd, temperate and furious,/Loyal and neutral, in a moment?" is a question that is designed to suggest to his deceived hearers his own attachment to an ideal of manhood which fallible humanity cannot realize in crisis. But to the expedient Macbeth, who has recovered from the whiteness of heart his wife upbraided after Duncan's death, "wisdom," "temperance," "loyalty" and "neutrality"--that is, those "words" that "to the heat of deeds too cold breath gives"--signify nothing. Hence the man who could in a moment combine temperance and fury would, in the language taught by Lady Macbeth, be "No man" indeed. But the man who allows fury to outrun "the pauser, reason" or--to change the metaphor--who screws his courage rather than his temperance to the sticking place is, in the overt appeal of the speech, very much a man; in the deeper, covert meaning of the speech, it is serpentine guile rather than loyal fury that informs such manliness. To the heart that is not nourished by the milk of human kindness (a symbol of the new Macbeth) "love" too is nothing; hence, in terms of Macbeth's murderous choice in Act I, Scene vii, "Courage" is the key to action, while courage sanctioned by the love that is loyalty is the key to the mendacious speaking picture of the action.

But the equivocal ingenuity of Macbeth as demonstrated in this speech is not unalloyed. He has scorched but not yet killed the better self whose guise he presents to his hearers. Though "there, the murtherers . . . ." is a blatant lie, the sentence that prepares for that lie all too keenly captures the reality of Macbeth's vision of the dead Duncan as a metaphysical phenomenon rather than mere physical corpse. "Here lay Duncan,/His silver skin lac'd with his golden blood" unerringly reflects, as Professor W.A. Murray has so well shown,[57] Macbeth's vision of the timeless truth of Duncan's goodness glorified. By comparison, the thick night of Macbeth's own guilt reduces him and his world to worthlessness. "All is but toys" and "renown, and grace, is dead" (l. 94) are lies uttered by Macbeth as Machiavel. But though he utters them as lies intended to deceive his hearers as to his guilt, they are truths also, whatever his intentions. They are words conveying the same truths as were conveyed by the mysterious voices that accused the murderer in Scene ii, by the choric voices in Scenes iii-iv, by the confused cosmos in all three scenes, and by Macbeth himself both in the terrified awe of his immediate response to his deed and in the unintended truths that show through his guise of deceit in the subsequent scene. Similarly, when Macbeth describes the murder-weapons as "unmannerly breech'd with gore," his lying words reveal the true nature of the crime. Insofar as "unmannerly" denotes "unaccustomed," the word captures the truth of Macbeth's death-dealing as an act of destructive daring similar in effect to his accustomed martial destructiveness but dissimilar in kind in that his destructiveness has been "unmannerly" released from the bonds of loyalty and love. Thus, even the language of Macbeth in Act II, Scene iii, language that is univocal in intention but ambiguous in significance, language resonant with past, rejected meanings unintended at the instant of expression, reveals the nature of the protagonist's new relationship with time.

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[57] "Why Was Duncan's Blood Golden," Shakespeare Survey, 19 (1966), 34-43.

The principal dramatic effect of Act II, Scene iii centres on the psychomachic convention of making each of the characters appearing on the stage an articulator of the insights and deliberations of the hero. Each of the dramatis personae appearing here functions, then, as a kind of ventricle of memory, echoing Macbeth's chief considerations and restating major tragic themes. Their successive utterances combine into a whole, unified like a series of symphonic themes.

The organization of this symphonic effect is one of the means by which Shakespeare establishes Macbeth's new relationship with time, that is, his discovery of the living past in each present moment. This is a discovery that especially informs the "To-morrow and to-morrow and to-morrow" soliloquy (V. v. 19-28), where Macbeth's emphasis on the void of the future and his nihilistic portrait of the human condition are based on the intense awareness of the futility of the tragic yesterdays he has lived since the death of Duncan.

Even in Act II, Scene iii, in the litany of aphorisms with which he proclaimed to the gathered nobles his dismay at the king's murder, Macbeth utters sentences that have a proleptic ironic--and also quasi-choric--function, a function most clearly discernible, perhaps, in the "To-morrow" soliloquy. The expediency that prompts such a virtuoso display of deceptive piety reveals itself in words that are, even as they are mouthed, conspicuously the confession of Macbeth's better self:

> Had I but died an hour before this chance,
> I had liv'd a blessed time; for, from this instant,
> There's nothing serious in mortality;
> All is but toys: renown, and grace, is dead;
> The wine of life is drawn, and the mere lees
> Is left this vault to brag of.
>
> (II. iii. 91-96)

These words have an immediate irony as an expression of insincerity designed to deceive the hearers; thus they exemplify the virtue on which the speaker is relying and intends to rely. They have another, a reflective, level of irony, in that they echo the traditional concerns of the speaker's heart, the values of his customary ethical system. They have a third and more complex, a proleptic, level of irony that is most important of all, for Macbeth's own lips sententiously announce a judgment that establishes the nature of the damnation he is to experience here upon the bank and shoal of time. The choric effect of this speech epitomizes the effective mirroring of Macbeth's earlier concerns provided in the words of the voluble porter, eloquent Macduff, terse Banquo and circumspect Malcolm. Even Lady Macbeth, whose tongue cannot support such truths, joins in the chorus by means of the ineffable rhetoric of her fainting; whether we interpret her fit as ploy or otherwise, her debility is a dramatic proof of the inadequacy of all she represents and an acknowledgment-in-action of the failure of the naturalistic and the expedient to maintain its all-in-all sufficiency against the reality and the code of ethics that affirm their pertinence and vitality around and within the future queen and king.

The primary effect of Act II, Scene iv is to reinforce the accumulated choric suggestions of the three preceding scenes. The commentary here is more compressed and more direct, yielding further testimony about the macrocosmic repercussions of the murder of Duncan and further evidence of Macbeth's alienation from honorable life. The scene thus reaffirms the truth of the protagonist's insight when he spoke of trumpet-tongued angels and horsed cherubins proclaiming his outrage throughout creation. Rosse now speaks of "the heavens, as troubled with man's act" threatening the bloody human stage; through the predominance of thick night, the blanket that cloaks the shame of day and entombs living light, the very heavens themselves articulate what the mute stones mentioned in the "dagger" soliloquy have failed to utter. Rosse's interlocutor, the old man, who in the final lines of the scene becomes the embodiment of the piety of the past, speaks of the "mousing owl" which, inordinately, hawks at and kills a towering and proud falcon. Rosse recounts the strange story of the wildness and cannibalism of Duncan's recently tame, obedient steeds.[58] The mousing owl becomes an image of Macbeth's unnatural manliness, the origin of these "confused events,/ New hatch'd to th' woeful time" (II. iii. 59-60): the unnatural reveals itself in disorder. The anarchic horses mirror the anarchy of Duncan's once loyal knight, Macbeth (ll. 11-19); the minions of the equine world (II. ii. 15) echo the disorder of Valour's minion (I. ii. 19).

It is appropriate, then, that, when Macbeth enters, the first question addressed to him should be "How goes the world, Sir, now?" (l. 21). Already, Macduff has been established as a force of retribution by the business of the knocking at the gate and by his voicing Nature's outrage at the regicide. The question addressed to him by Rosse is universal in its implications, and his answer, "Why, see you not?" suggests that he has the insight to judge the world of Macbeth's creating. The quality of this insight is stressed by the contrast of Rosse's simplistic moralizing with the irony of Macduff's relaying of court gossip and speculation. Macduff's echoing the shallow "knowledge" (l. 22) of the courtiers about the guilt of Duncan's sons draws from Rosse a reflection on "Thriftless Ambition, that will ravin up/Thine own life's means!" (ll. 28-29). But his own insight into the nature of treachery and the identity of the traitor reveals itself in his detachment from whatever fruition attends Macbeth's reign. First, he blatantly refuses to attend the coronation. Second, his suspicions about the future are revealed in the expression of his fear that the new garments of obedience may not easily cleave to the subject's mould even with the aid of use: "Well, my you see things well done there:--adieu!--/ Lest our old robes sit easier than our new!" (ll. 37-38). His "adieu!" seems a final leave-taking of the amoral world to be ruled over by Macbeth and a farewell to the inhabitants of that world, time-servers such as Rosse, the pawns of unnatural expediency.

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[58] The Pegasus image as Vernon uses it in his praise of reformed, chivalric Hal in I Henry IV (IV. i. 106-110) represents the ideal of good horsemanship (so important in Il Cortegiano) that, symbolically, presents man as master of the bestial element: thus it may be said to be an emblem of discipline and, hence, of civilization. The wildness of Duncan's horses symbolizes the chaos resulting from failure in discipline. Richard III's unhorsed condition and his "My kingdom for a horse!" belongs to the same symbolic pattern.

This scene, especially because of Macduff's crucial role as a force of Nemesis, reaffirms the validity of the prudential reasonings of the protagonist, who foresaw the inevitable consequences in the world of time of what Rosse here refers to as "this more than bloody deed" (l. 22). Macduff's "I'll to Fife" (l. 36) signals the beginning of Macbeth's isolation from loyal subjects and troops of friends (V. iii. 25), and the Old Man's prayer that God may bestow his "benison" on Macduff and on all who "would make good of bad" further identifies Macduff with the forces of right and justice that may undo the Macbeth who already has made bad of good.

Thus Act II, Scene iv provides an unambiguous commentary on the truths grasped by Macbeth's better self and on the equivocations of the Machiavel in him. In this way it functions as a choric peroration to the whole argument of the first two acts. The judgment of outraged Nature and the judgment of Macduff combine to damn what is done and to suggest the retribution that is to follow. Hence the retrospective function of the scene is identical with its prospective function, for the scene serves too as choric prologue to Macbeth's futile search for security in the succeeding movements of the play. In these movements, which centre on the elimination first of Banquo and, then, of Macduff and, finally, of Macbeth himself, we watch the tragic hero struggle against a reality which he tried to annihilate but found to be enduring. These movements are successive stages in a war of truths, a war whose every campaign is a struggle by Macbeth to vindicate the chosen self by suppressing the truths to which his intended victims and the cosmos and his own better self have so eloquently attested.

In the murder scene, Shakespeare forces the audience to concentrate on the inner drama by the device of keeping both the person of Duncan and the act of murder off-stage.

The principal action of the scene is the release of language from the strait-jacket of equivocation in which Macbeth has tried to incapacitate it. With this release occurs Macbeth's encounter with failure and fear, and through this his better nature momentarily regains its ascendancy within him. Thus he perceives the metaphysical reality of the crime, the significance of the crime in terms of non-expedient values, and the inescapability of the self rejected in the closing dialogue of Act I, Scene vii. To heighten the effect of this encounter with what the manly--that is, murderous--self has termed "nothing," Shakespeare focuses our attention on Lady Macbeth and makes hers the central consciousness through which the action is filtered. The dramatic technique used here is similar to that of the preceding scene. In Act II, Scene i Banquo's prayer to the "merciful Powers" is uttered before Macbeth enters; then it serves as a backdrop that casts into relief the nature of Macbeth's fidelity to the self born of "suggestion." In Act II, Scene ii, Lady Macbeth first appears, and the self-deceptive self-possession of the first eight lines she speaks serves to magnify the effect of Macbeth's desperate reaction to the full meaning of his achievement. In Scene i, Banquo's remarks about honour are such that we can recognize in them an echo of Macbeth's better nature and, hence, can see Banquo, symbolically, as the voice of "Worthy" Macbeth arguing against the immorality of Macbeth the Machiavel. In

Scene ii, the positions are reversed; now Lady Macbeth is the voice of the manly Macbeth arguing against the moral vision of the humane, natural, humanistic Macbeth--against the "Banquo" in him. In Macbeth's diametrically opposite roles in these two scenes surrounding the murder, Shakespeare dramatizes the _anagnorisis_ of the tragic hero. Henceforth, Macbeth's sole purpose will be to effect a reversal of the role he played successfully in the duologue with Banquo. This is the role of the equivocating actor who dons the mask of deception to hide reality from his auditor, not the role of the actor whose purpose it is to hold the mirror up to nature's truth. Macbeth will try to make the face of the Machiavel vizard to his own heart, thus perservering in the self-deception that was so essential a part of his commitment to the "horrid business." By such poor playing he will make his bloody stage a stage of fools on which he moves towards what Curry calls "the borderland of spiritual annihilation."[59]

Lady Macbeth's concept of courage is inalienable from the assumption that the only reality to which human action relates is the reality of the physical. It is appropriate therefore that the boldness and fire-of-purpose that animate her at the beginning of the murder scene should be nourished by the palpable substance of the posset she shared with the sleeping grooms. It is appropriate too that she is wrong in her assumption about the beneficial influence of her drink; the porter proves to us the wrongness of her declaration when he asserts that drink is equivocal, provoking desire but taking away performance. This assertion applies with ironic appropriateness to a Lady who, for all her boldness and desire, could do nothing to the Duncan who seemed a "picture" of her sleeping father. Yet this is she who, to support her definition of courage and to prove the integrity of her purposefulness, declared her readiness to destroy the hypothetical baby at her breast. The language that Lady Macbeth has championed depends for its validity upon her lack of imagination to see the horror of evil or the inevitable consequences of that horror and upon a failure in self-knowledge. That failure is made evident in the words she utters as bloody-handed Macbeth enters the scene bearing daggers that are "gouted" with the blood of guilt. The credibility of her insight thus impaired, her efforts to restrict the reality of the deed to her own terms of reference serve but to expose the absolute inadequacy of the words with which she tries to deny the truth of Macbeth's view of his action. To her a knocking at the south entry, a voice in the night, an owl's scream and a cricket's cry are noises to be catalogued rationally--though "scream" and "cry", the audience must acknowledge, have a strange place in the list. To her husband, however, these noises are the voices of outraged Nature, voices that reveal guilt to be something distinct from criminal evidence: "Macbeth does murther sleep" (l. 35). However insistently she may call his murderousness the "noble strength" of valour (l. 44), however coldly she may confuse the fear that is guilt with infirmity of purpose (l. 51), however logically she may refer to blood as merely "filthy witness" and refuse to recognize it as symbol, however determinedly she may scornfully dismiss conscience as childish fantasy (ll. 52-54) and chide Macbeth that his constancy has left him unattended, her husband, for his part, is incapable of equivocating "fear" and "guilt" and "noble" out of their moral significance: "Glamis hath murther'd Sleep, and therefore Cawdor/Shall sleep no more, Macbeth shall sleep no more" (ll. 41-42). Here our memory of the Glamis-Cawdor-King pattern of the "suggestion" scene might lead us to an expectation that the pattern be re-echoed. But it is not re-echoed. The progression is, as it were, aborted. The disappointment of our aroused expectations is a surprise effect which lends emphasis to this utterance as a signal that, for Macbeth himself, this is much more a tragedy of awareness than a tragedy of ambition. That indication is more forcefully given a few moments later in "I am afraid to think what I have done" (l. 50) and again in the fearful thinking about hands that incarnadine the multitudinous seas (ll. 60-62). In the awareness made manifest through Macbeth's fear the audience perceives that, whereas Lady Macbeth is right when she sees a decline in Macbeth's bloody purposefulness, the"constancy" of his habitual values and insights is only too faithful in its attendance on him. He is dreadfully attended by the constancy in him of the knowledge of all that best becomes a man.

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[59] _Shakespeare's Philosophical Patterns_, p. 133.

To emphasize Macbeth's appalled awareness of the nature of his guilt is not to suggest that he is repentant. By the standards of his wife's code of virile strength he should shame to wear so white a heart (l. 64) and to be so "poorly" lost in these inexpedient thoughts (ll. 70-71). It is by these standards that he tries to evaluate his situation, for "Twere best not know myself" is more a commitment to expedient ignorance than a confession of moral insight. Macbeth here associates self-knowledge with morality and acknowledges to himself the necessity for avoiding both. What the statement implies is perhaps best discovered in the *nosce teipsum* literature of the sixteenth century,[60] but reference to passages in Shakespearian drama such as Richard II's meditation before death (Richard II, V. v. 1-66), Duke Vincentio's de contemptu mundi homily for Claudio in his death-cell (Measure for Measure, III. i. 5-14) and Hamlet's pronouncements on man's place on the ladder of being (especially "What a piece of work is man . . . " [II. ii. 300-305] and the "How all occasions . . . " soliloquy [IV. iv. 33-56]) provides us with the essence of the literature of self-knowledge. The Aristotelian idea of man as microcosm and the Ciceronian concept of ethical decorum associated with it (De Officiis, I. xcii-cli); the doctrine of free will as defended by Erasmus and others, especially Pico della Mirandola; the ideal of recta ratio, with its stress upon the godlike potential in man and upon the necessity for practicing the cardinal virtues, especially temperance, and the affirmation of the virtue of loyalty (which manifests itself in Castiglione's ideal of service)--all of these are commonplaces of nosce teipsum thought in the Renaissance. What these commonplaces establish as good, Macbeth recognizes he must reject. The concept of the self implied in these ideas equates "self" and "soul"--or with what in this

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[60] The *locus classicus* of the *nosce teipsum* doctrine is Cicero's *De Officiis*, I. xi. This work was not only studied in Latin in the schoolroom but was available in English since 1556, when Nicholas Grimald's translation was published. Cicero's doctrine was enriched with the Christian doctrine of grace by Erasmus, whose *Enchiridion Militis Christiani* (1502) may well have been the most influential source of *nosce teipsum* ideas in English life: Tyndale's translation appeared in 1533 and was frequently reprinted in the following half-century. The Ciceronian ideal of self-knowledge informs such widely-read works as Elyot's *Boke named The Governour*, La Primaudaye's *Académie Francoise*, Castiglioni's *Il Cortegiano* (which is an important purveyor of the ideal of service as antithesis to disorderly ambition) Pico's *Oratio de dignitate Hominis* and Sir John Davies'

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poem, "Nosce Teipsum" which appeared in 1599. Since Macbeth's line is clearly associated with the idealist's moral treatment of the know-thyself theme, I make no reference above to Machiavelli's anti-humanistic revision of the doctrine, nor to any writings of Renaissance sceptics which support such views of the self as we find characteristic of Iago or Edmund or Lady Macbeth.

discussion I have called the ethical self--, and self-knowledge, because of its association with ethical probity, inevitably involves the responsibility to be true to oneself (i.e. to one's better self). Macbeth's "'Twere best not know myself", therefore, implicitly acknowledges and rejects these ideas. In that statement--because he shows no willingness to follow the dictates of his moral nature--he may be seen as flouting what Richard II learned to be essential to "the concord of [his] state and time" (V. v. 47), espousing those delusive ephemeral goods which Claudio was admonished to fear worse than death, and wishing to avoid the demands associated with the doctrine of man that concerns Hamlet. Macbeth's acknowledgment that it were best not know himself is in perfect accord with his choice of naturalistic amorality: it restates the wilful rejection of the better self which recoils from evil and keenly feels the fear which is guilt.

The difference between regret and repentance lies in the role of the will as a determinant of moral probity or culpability. Just as moral culpability involves not only temptation and knowledge of the immorality of the attractive thought, word, or deed but also as unambiguous act of will, the wrong-doer's fulness of consent, so repentance involves not only knowledge and regret but also commitment to self-amendment, again an act of will. There is really no need to consult any _summa_, theological or otherwise, for the foundation of this doctrine, because Shakespeare establishes it dramatically time and time again throughout his plays.[61] It is the lesson directed by Prospero towards the patients of his regenerative white magic in The Tempest; it is the secret of Paulina's moral midwifery in The Winter's Tale; it is essential to the ironic treatment of the to-fro swaying between repentance and expediency on the part of King Henry IV; it is the pith of Rosalind's hearers' understanding of her didacticism in Act V of As You Like It, and in it lies the promise of a growth to maturity of the unwise but wisely willing nobles of Navarre in the final lines of Love's Labour's Lost. But nowhere in the Shakespearian canon is that doctrine applied with more significance than in Act II, Scene ii of Macbeth because there it is the nexus of the protagonist's spiritual deterioration. Macbeth is aware that the bloody deed has indeed rent his single state of man, for he sees "hand" and "eye" thrown into anarchic antagonism. The eye, whose "seeing" represents the knowledge of the indelible reality of Macbeth's guilt, finds on the murderer's hands blood which, though it may be physically washed away with "a little water," has reality as an indelible stain which the physical immensity and power of "all great Neptune's ocean" cannot efface. Thus the eye has insight not only into the nature of Macbeth's guilt but into the stasis of Macbeth's impenitence. The ocean's powerlessness is attributable to the will's intransigence, because there are, after all, waters that can cleanse such guilt. Banquo's "merciful Powers," Macbeth's "Pity" (which, it must be noted, can bring tears to "every eye," his own not excluded) and what, in Hamlet, Claudius refers to as the "rain enough in the sweet heavens" can wash from the hand of guilt the blood of murdered kin. The hands that affright the eye of insight represent the inadequate, limited, physical world, the reality of the senses, the ethic of expedience, the whole realm of experience in which it is "good" to release manliness from the restraints of humanitas. In the last lines of the scene, Macbeth's words of regret are not words of contrition. The statement, "To know my deed, 'Twere best not know myself" is indeed a confession of the truth witnessed by the imaginatively seeing eye, but, rather than manifesting a resolution of amendment, it reveals a fidelity to the will-to-crime. Macbeth decides he must not know himself. This means, in effect, that he chooses the self that operated in the flux of occasion to hasten the coming on of time rather than the self that sees into the timeless. Thus (to extend his own metaphor) the hand must strive still to pluck out the eye, for, otherwise, the self that reasserted its truths in the dialogue just ending will insist on further proclaiming its insights into the irrevocable.

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[61] Shakespeare's dramatic practice is in accord with the Augustinian doctrine that the will cannot be depraved by anything inferior to it and, so, depraves itself by the making of improper choice. St. Thomas Aquinas is in agreement with St. Augustine on the sovereignty of will in determining moral action. See De libero arbitrio, I. xi, 21; I. xii. 25 and Summa Theologica, I. lxxxii, 3.

CHAPTER IV

"Nothing Is"

By the beginning of Act III, we know Macbeth as one whose manly daring has won him the crown, housed him in Forres, and taught him to wear the stolen robe of monarchy with the aplomb of a smiling damned villain. The ingenuity with which he discovers Banquo's purposes and the politeness with which he dismisses his entourage in order to converse with the murderers suggest that this false man finds it as easy an office to counterfeit unfelt affability as to show an unfelt sorrow. But though he reigns in Forres, far from the echoing stairways of fatal Inverness, and though his courtiers enact their pageants of ordered life unaware of how the heavens threaten the bloody stage of Scotland, Macbeth is not free from what his wife is soon to call the "sorriest fancies" that make joy doubtful (III. ii. 4-12). The hand that wrought "confusion's masterpiece" has not plucked out the eye that saw into the timeless meaning of Duncan's death. The self that saw with that eye has not yet been reduced to nothing. The habitual language of that self has not been silenced. The truth attested to by that self has not yet been finally given the lie. But Macbeth's commitment to the contrary self is unmitigated. It leads him to prove false the truth of the rejected self, to prove its language meaningless and its vision unreal---in fine, to demonstrate the non-existence of that self. To prove all these things to be nothing is necessary if desire's masterpiece is to be perfected. To prove them nothing is Macbeth's obsessive struggle in the central scenes of the play. And from the beginning of his engagement in that struggle he experiences defeat.

The central scenes of Macbeth, the first four scenes of the third act, are a unified dramatic statement about that struggle and that defeat. In these scenes there is a strong parallel between the protagonist's commitment to proving the adequacy of the reality he has chosen and his frustration at experiencing the futility of his purposefulness. The frustration arises because, already, fidelity to the unkind self involves him in the experience of retribution.[1]

Retribution at this point in the play has little or nothing to do with the "even-handed Justice" which, in the "If it were done" soliloquy, Macbeth acknowledged as insuring that the teacher of "bloody instructions" be plagued by the consequences of a lesson well taught. Indeed, though Banquo's dying words urge Fleance to that revenge which is justice and though Macbeth draws our attention to the existence of Duncan's sons (though, implicitly, as victims of his own justice, not as a retributive threat), the revenge theme in these core scenes is in a minor key. Retribution, instead, is a force emanating from within the very being of the protagonist. It has to do with the presence in him of more than a few drops of the milk of human kindness. It is a force arising from the inalienable presence of what in this argument has been called the Banquo principle within Macbeth, that is, the ethical self. And this force maintains its disconcerting dynamism even while he strives to distance himself from that very principle. It is only when the damnation of Macbeth upon the bank of time has been fully established that Shakespeare develops the theme of external retribution.

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[1] T. McAlindon, Shakespeare and Decorum (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1973), sees the process of retribution as beginning in the third Act, but he associates it with "time's revenges" and "Nemesis" (pp. 154-56) and does not explore the dramatization of retribution.

Thus, Macbeth's determination to prove the adequacy of the reality of his choosing is the source of what insures the proof of its inadequacy. This irony informs incident and language in the four core scenes in question. Banquo, dead, dramatically resists the confines of the factual reality of clinical death. Words such as "nothing" and "fear" escape the univocal strait jackets in which the hero endeavours to confine them. And the sufficiency of bent-up "corporal" agency (I. vii. 81) to achieve desired success is shown to be very insufficient indeed. The raptness that accompanied Macbeth's first encounter with the possibilities of an "ill" he would choose as his "good" is shown to have evolved into the "restless ecstasy" and recurring fits that he acknowledges to belie the "success" which might have come from Duncan's surcease. These nightmarish fits and starts--the paradoxical terrors that afflict the pathologically vigilant protagonist--are the psychological phenomena accompanying his adherence to the good of his own choosing. The intensity of Macbeth's waking nightmare is highlighted by Lady Macbeth's confession in soliloquy that even for her, less imaginative and less insightful though we recognize her to be, "Nought's had, all's spent,/ Where our desire is got without content" (III. ii. 4-5). However platitudinous this confession may appear, it reveals the frustration experienced by one who has been transported beyond the ignorant past into the nothingness of present "doubtful joy."

Frustration as retribution is the theme of the dramatic unit comprised by Act III, Scenes i-iv. This theme is clearly reflected in incident, language and idea, as well as in the structure of the unit as a whole. The climax of all this is reached in Act III, Scene iv, the disrupted-banquet scene, where Macbeth's outrage against nature, against kindness, against all that becomes the truly good life is concretely realized in his exclusion from life's feast when, as Mark Rose puts it, he is "barred from the table by the image of his own tyranny."[2] Just as the fits and starts of the present are anticipatorily reflected in the raptness of the temptation scene (Act I, Scene iii), so the symbolically blatant exclusion from the feast is prepared for by Macbeth's earlier departure from a banquet chamber to contemplate a deed which he knew would stir the very cosmos into retributive action (I. vii. 22).

Structurally the first four scenes of Act III are organized as a tense and terse escalation towards the climax of frustration occasioned by the presence of ghostly Banquo at the supper table. This escalation is wrought by the juxtaposition of dramatic units in a system of alternating and symmetrical balances. The major organizing principle here, as elsewhere in the play, is that of the triptych. One view of the over-all design of the unit discovers a balancing of Scenes i and ii (the preparations for Banquo's murder) and Scene iv (the aftermath of Banquo's death) around Scene iii (the murder scene itself). An alternate view--and this is arithmetically attractive because of the near-identical length of Scenes i and iv (141 and 142 lines respectively)--

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[2] Mark Rose, *Shakespearian Design* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of *Harvard University Press*, 1972), p. 160.

suggests that the unit may be organized around Scenes ii and iii, the scenes in which the cancelling and tearing to pieces of the "great bond which keeps [the protagonist] pale" is essayed first in intention and then in act. These two scenes, which may even be coincident in time, are those of Banquo's absence from the court, and they can be seen as framed by Scenes i and iv, the first analysing the significance of the presence of the living Banquo, the second defining the significance of the presence of the dead Banquo.

Either view of the structural arrangement of the unit focuses the audience's attention upon Banquo as representative, in death as in life, of an inalienable constant, and emphasizes the tragic vanity of Macbeth's determination to solve the problems of his dark ecstasy in terms of the reality of his choice. The vanity in question is dramatized in the increasing weakness of Lady Macbeth's importance in the dramatic action as she continues to mirror the hero's will--and his failure--to annihilate that constant.

In analyzing the structure of the unit according to the first view suggested above, we discover that the first two scenes, which have as their main business the preparations for the elimination of Banquo, are really three distinct minor movements, dramatizing in turn Macbeth's relationship with Banquo (III. i. 1-71), with the Murderers (III.i.71-141) and with his wife (III. ii. 1-56). The Banquo panel concentrates the fears, more metaphysical than physical, which plague the hero; the Lady Macbeth panel depicts the renewed commitment to the doing of deeds that are designed to cancel the truths reflected in those fears; and both panels are juxtaposed with the scene in which Macbeth interviews and persuades the assassins, thereby renewing his commitment to the inadequate reality of his choice, a reality whose justification is his prime concern, his "near'st of life" (III. i. 117). Here Banquo and Lady Macbeth still fulfil their symbolic roles as mirrors of the hero's contrary selves. The juxtaposition of each panel in turn with the panel featuring the conference with the assassins effects a form of montage which serves as an implicit commentary on how far Macbeth has travelled along his tragic way and on the psychological, moral and philosophical cost of the journey so far.

The very order of events suggests that, ironically, the elimination of Banquo is not the point at all--that it is nought but a subterfuge of the self-deceiver who by denying the validity of his former wholeness must find the source of his mental turmoil outside himself. When Macbeth speaks with his wife in Scene ii, he has already secured from the Murderers a oneness of sorts with his own manly determination: they will do the deed. Yet Macbeth's mind is obsessed with failure:

> We have scorch'd the snake, not kill'd it:
> She'll close and be herself; whilst our poor malice
> Remains in danger of her former tooth.
>
> (III. ii. 13-15)

It is a failure more far-reaching than anything associated with Banquo as prudent, threatening agent of retribution and deeper than the concern with the threat to dynastic desires ("the seed of Banquo kings!") It is a failure admitted in the avowal that Duncan's untimely sleep seems preferable to the nightmare of Macbeth's untimely success. In this awareness lies the recognition, or the submerged knowledge at least, that Macbeth may not enjoy the success which should come with the surcease of Banquo, who, he avers, is the sole object of his fears. The very emphasis upon the fitful fevers that infect life and upon the poisoning of the mind by scorpion conscience seems oddly timed, especially when we consider that the desperadoes are already stationed where they will fulfil the offices entrusted to them (III. iii. 2-3) and effectively do what Macbeth is to call "a deed of dreadful note" (III. ii. 44). If, on the one hand, Banquo is the sole object of Macbeth's fear, that is if he is the "great bond/Which keeps [Macbeth] pale," and, on the other, Banquo is to be cancelled and torn to pieces even at this very hour, then the content and tone of Macbeth's confessional revelations make it clear that his fear has another source, that the great bond is not Banquo but, rather the self which Banquo mirrors.

This idea is prepared for in the first part of Act III, Scene i, the Banquo panel, a unit which itself is organized according to the triptych principle. First Banquo holds the stage for a soliloquy which is theatrically abridged by the entrance of the royal procession. The disturbed world of rumination yields to that of ordered ceremony and public dialogue. Later Macbeth, alone, takes us into the disturbed universe of his speculations in the "To be thus is nothing" soliloquy, which is succeeded, but not abridged, by the entrance of the two Murderers. The soliloquies both dwell on the suggestive oracular quality of the Witches' words upon the heath; both dwell on the idea of dynasty and do so in the same imaginative terms, Banquo's referring to his being the "root" of future kings, Macbeth speaking of Banquo's "seed" as kings and of his own "barren sceptre" and "fruitless crown"; both hinge upon sentences in the conditional mood ("If there come truth from them . . ." [l. 6] and "If it be so . . ." [l. 63]);[3] and both begin with "fear" as a key word and concentrate on the "foulness" of Macbeth's deed. Between these speeches, Shakespeare contrives to present the sole occasion following the death of Duncan when Macbeth, outwardly secure in the stolen robes of royalty and wearing the golden round with ostensible dignity and grace, succeeds unequivocally in playing the role of the complete Machiavel: here he mocks the time with fairest show, and his false face of affability (I. vii. 82-83) hides from Banquo, Lady Macbeth and his whole entourage the dire intentions harboured in the heart, the evil that is his perverse pleasure. What intensifies the impact of Macbeth's mastery of his time (III. i. 40) here is the effective contrast achieved in the soliloquies. Banquo is shown in relation to the Witches' prophecies and temptation in a manner reminiscent of Macbeth's puzzled response to those prophecies in the "Two truths are told . . ." soliloquy (I. iii. 127ff.). Whatever the inclination towards anticipating the role of time or chance in setting himself up in hope (III. i. 10)--and this is but the vaguest potential in Banquo's line of speculation--there is no signal of commitment, and there is far less intense concern with the coming on of time than there was when Macbeth so responded to the prophecies that in his raptness nothing was but what was not (I. vii. 142).

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[3] See Francis Berry's discussion of the function of what he calls the Subjunctive Mood in Macbeth, especially regarding its relation to desire and conscience (Poet's Grammar, pp. 49 ff.). Banquo's soliloquy is abridged theatrically before the will can exercise itself, removing him from the world of Subjunctive imaginings to Future Indicative decision-makings. Macbeth ends his soliloquy with an Imperative, which has the same function as Berry attributes to the Indicative.

In Banquo's soliloquy Shakespeare establishes one pole of response to the mind-firing suggestions of the Witches: temptation not yet crystalized is encountered in its amorphous dubiousness, but the mind is not tainted by foulness because the will does not exercise itself to give temptation the shape of the future action. In the soliloquy following

Banquo's exit Macbeth is shown at the other pole of response; he has realized the potential in question, has nursed temptation through the phases of inclination (I. iii.), decision (I. vii), action (ii. i.) and consequence (II. ii and iii) and finds that the fulfilment of his being set up in hope is the knowledge of the emptiness of what was contemplated and acted upon: "To be thus is nothing" (III. i. 47). This statement is a judgment upon Macbeth's state of being. It is also a commentary upon the contrived semblance of order, geniality and harmonious community in the public scene which Macbeth has terminated with the words "Let every man be master of his time/Till seven at night" (ll. 40-41). The statement further reflects on the distance of Banquo from Macbeth's present state: Macbeth in an attempt to create his own world of meaning has only wrought chaos, has reduced the good in life to nothing. The good promised to Banquo in his posterity is as yet nothing, but can with time's ordered development realize itself. Macbeth's nothing is the achievement of a past that haunts and destroys the present; time brings in its revenges. Banquo's nothing is ephemeral, a potential to be realized in a future of growing honours; time still promises, and still validates hope.

Banquo's soliloquy, then, serves as an antithesis to the meditation and the desperation of Macbeth and functions as a dramatic statement of a mode of prudent thought and action that Macbeth rejected when he adopted the language of expediency, with all it implied, and that he again rejects when he endeavours to persuade the murderers. But the insights of Macbeth's soliloquy run counter to the expression of determination with which it ends. He identifies Banquo with the wisdom that is antithetical to his own restless ecstasy, sees in him that "dauntless temper of . . . mind" which contrasts with his own "fil'd" mind, recognizes in him an ability to "act in safety" which counterpoints his own shaken, fear-haunted state, and sees the frightening opposition between Banquo's "royalty of nature" and the royalty, associated with "barren sceptre" and "fruitless crown," which is his own. What he attributes to his antagonist here reflects Duncan's earlier recognition of Macbeth as "worthy gentleman." That state of being is now by choice anathema to him. But the choice of the amoral expediency does not eliminate the awareness that such amorality is immoral according to the ethical criteria abandoned by him. Those criteria inform his definition of the state of frustration provided in the lines

> For Banquo's issue have I *fil'd* my mind;
> For them the *gracious* Duncan have I murther'd;
> *Put rancours in the vessel of my peace*,
> Only for them; and *mine eternal jewel*
> *Given to the common Enemy of man*,
> To make them kings.
>
> (III. i. 64-69; emphasis mine)

Within Macbeth's soliloquy determination wars with ethical awareness and wins another skirmish, but the victory is pyrrhic, as the renewal of like consideration and resolve in Act III, Scene ii makes clear. For the moment, and appropriately just before the two Murderers approach him, Macbeth shows the primacy of his fidelity to the reality he has chosen as his perverse realm of being. He does so by a stout-hearted or, perhaps, desperate challenge in which he dares fate to deny his chosen destiny: "Rather than so, come, fate, into the list,/And champion me to the utterance" (ll. 70-71). It is a powerfully ambiguous statement, reflecting at once the problem of valour and the problem of language which is at the core of the tragedy.[4]

The daring of this challenge to fate anticipates the resolve informing "For mine own good,/All causes shall give way" (III. iv. 134-35) after Macbeth's recovery from the terrifying appearances of Banquo's ghost. Furthermore the quality of the challenge to fate anticipates the integrity of resolution that remains unimpaired even in the final defiance of Macduff. But the expression is ambiguous: the challenge to fate ironically allows for a battle that is as much a linguistic as military, and the appropriateness of the unintended pun in "utterance" will be apparent when Macduff accepts or, rather, provokes the protagonist's last desperate challenge. Macduff, fate's agent, is to defeat Macbeth not only on the level of martial prowess but also on the level of language, discomfiting him in a fight *à outrance* and, prior to that, dismaying him with the utterance of the truth about his birth and, thus, revealing the equivocal basis of Macbeth's dependence on the language of expediency. Macbeth suffers a dual defeat. He is forced to acknowledge that words coined by "juggling fiends" (V. ix. 19) --by the Witches or by himself--cannot gainsay the truths articulated by the "accursed" tongue of righteous Macduff. And as the language of manliness is proved inadequate, the manliness itself is proved defective. This is a manliness which Macbeth defined as essentially bestial when he dared Banquo's ghost to appear in the guise of "rugged Russian bear," impervious "armed rhinoceros" or resilient "Hyrcan tiger" (III. iv. 99-100), to take on any appearance conformable to his own "rugged looks" (III. ii. 27). In the final challenge this kind of manliness does not prevail against the manliness of an opponent whose valour is, as Macbeth's formerly had been, the arms and armour of justice rather than the ferocity of powerful brutes.

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[4] I follow O.E.D. in interpreting "Champion" to mean "challenge to a contest" or "bid defiance to," and "to the utterance" as meaning "to the bitter end" or "to the utmost extremity of violence." But "utterance" still retains its association with articulation, so that, ambiguously, the challenge is an invitation to a battle of words as well as to a fight to the death of Macbeth or to his successful defiance of fate.

Macbeth's address to the Murderers begins with sentences that give the discussion a retrospective function and, thus, provide an additional ironic dimension to the dialogue with Banquo and to the ensuing soliloquy: "Was it not yesterday we spoke together? . . .Well, then, now/ Have you consider'd of my speeches?" (III. i. 173-75). The lessons of these former speeches and what we can take to be the repetition of their content in the dialogue that now follows are so dissociated from any acknowledgement of the reality of that "royalty of nature" and wisdom-guided valour, which in the soliloquy Macbeth both admires and fears, that Macbeth is evidently engaged, now as yesterday, in a determined effacing of an awareness that characterized his habitual vision of life and that re-emerges in private moments such as the soliloquy in Act III, Scene i and the dialogue with Lady Macbeth in Act III, Scene ii--an awareness, then, that coincides and contrasts with the willed harnessing of his mind to the necessities of his Machiavel world and the solely pragmatic values that should insure its sufficiency.

The triptych structure of Scenes i-ii as introductory unit in the larger triptych of Scenes i-iv achieves, as stated earlier, the complex effect of montage. It does so by suggesting to the audience the coexistence of the ruthless will of tyranny, demonstrated in the encounter with the Murderers, with the awareness of loss, and of the quality of what has been lost, reflected in the "To be thus is nothing" meditation. It enables the audience, for example, to discover in Macbeth's reference to the "dauntless temper of

[Banquo's] mind" and to that "wisdom that doth guide his valour/To act in safety" (ll. 51-53) the possibilities of these virtues being refused a place in the "valu'd file" of a contrary hierarchy of values--that is, of their being interpreted solely in Machiavellian terms--according to which the dauntless temper of mind is indistinguishable from ruthlessness, and wisdom is identified with the crafty guile that enables tyranny to hold its victims under fortune (l. 77).

The structure of Act III further encourages us reflectively to juxtapose with the concept of human fulfilment implicit in "rancours in the vessel of my peace" (l. 66) the antithetical idea of ungospell'd manhood (l. 89), which is associated with Macbeth's equation of the will to murder and the loving service (ll. 103-105) of subject to king. Such juxtaposition suggests the co-existence of the contrary selves whose interaction carries forward the theme of frustration, though this coexistence is outwardly denied by Macbeth's single-mindedness in his persuasion of the murderers.

The inescapability of the ethical self and Macbeth's will to escape its promptings are again emphasized in Act III, Scene ii, the Lady Macbeth panel of the introductory triptych. Again, this panel is given the characteristic triadic structure which reflects the tensions within the protagonist. The scene focuses first on Lady Macbeth, then on husband and wife in dialogue and, finally, on Macbeth whose prayer to "seeling night" is spoken in her presence but not directly addressed to her. And, aptly, the key to the scene is the experience of frustration, an experience dramatized immediately in the contrast between Lady Macbeth's apprehensiveness in the brief "Naught's had, all's spent" soliloquy (ll. 4-7) and her firmness in the advice she meted out to her faltering lord: "Things without all remedy/ Should be without regard: what's done is done" (ll. 11-12).

The juxtaposition of this scene with the preceding encounter of Macbeth with the murderers emphasizes the decline of Lady Macbeth's role as nourisher of the manliness to which she earlier played midwife. In Act II, Scene ii, where we see the immediate aftermath of the murder, she is the dominant figure, helping her husband master his fears and reminding him of the unreality of the phenomena manifesting themselves in the world of his active imagination. Now her pragmatism and lack of moral vision seem out of joint on two counts. First, her private musings, "'Tis safer to be that which we destroy,/Than by destruction dwell in doubtful joy" (ll. 6-7), show how imperfectly she had felt the future in the instant (I. v. 57-8) and undercut the ostensible conviction informing her public advice: "what's done is done." Second, this scene functions as a mirror image of Act II, Scene ii, in that it is Macbeth, not she, who acts as determiner of the direction of their dialogue; this inversion suggests a momentary but significant decline in her role as abetter and it demonstrates in her increasing silence how little she has anticipated her husband's strengths in the role she had so persuasively urged upon him.[5] Now she marvels at his words (l. 54).

The declining role of Lady Macbeth and the waste of silence that is to separate her from her husband, revealed here in her attempts to discover his secret thoughts and in her marvelling at the direness of them, has interesting implications for those who follow Kirschbaum, as I do, in discussing the symbolic function of her role.[6] I have argued that, in her values, in her language and in the quality of her will, Lady Macbeth objectifies or symbolizes the self of Macbeth's choosing, the self that led him to Duncan in Act II and that led the murderers in Act III, Scene i, towards the "great quell" of Banquo. I have argued earlier that she is the antithesis of the Duncan-world and its Weltanschauung, that she is the contrary of the Banquo principle. If she represents that self to which Macbeth has committed his destiny, how, it may be asked, does her decline as character relate to her function as symbol, especially when paradoxically, her influence lessens as Macbeth's commitment to what she represents is clearly unflagging? Such a question may be approached on two levels.

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[5] See Bernard McElroy, Shakespeare's Mature Tragedies (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1973), pp. 221 and 231-32, for a discussion of Lady Macbeth's failure to anticipate the strength of her husband's ruthless will and to foresee her own incapacity to live with horror. McElroy's reading of Macbeth is very like my own; he, too, sees Macbeth imposing his world view upon circumstance, and speaks of the will that determines such an imposition. He does not, however approach the problem as I do, and does not deal with the relationship between the ruthless will and the experience of frsutration as a form of damnation.

[6] See Chapter III of this discussion, p.191.

First of all, Lady Macbeth adopts for expedient purposes the concept of reality, the values and the language that enable her to conceive the idea of manhood she so ardently advocated. She does so with a conscious and desperate determination to violate her own nature. Her truth then depends upon the lie of achieved masculinity or of realized inhumanity; it depends upon her being effectively unsexed and upon her enjoying a physiological dispensation from whatever it is that provides access to remorse. The quality of her determination in the "Come, you spirits" invocation created her inhumane and simple world, but created it imperfectly. Hence her wistful regret now, which foreshadows the haunting guilt of her sleep-walking scene. But what Shakespeare accomplishes in the characterization of Lady Macbeth, especially in making her femininity an essential feature of the manliness theme,[7] is quite complex. She adopts the characteristic determination of the Machiavel, but her lack of imagination, which is a lack of penetrating insight, prevents her anticipatory encounter with the consequences of allowing such determination to manifest itself in deeds. Macbeth adopts the same quality of determination, but does so only after a thorough exploration of, and imaginative encounter with, the consequences of his wilfulness. He makes his own that which in her, if her woman's breasts were verily filled with gall, and only then, would make her mother of her fantastic men-children. He actualizes her would-be manliness and, because he has encountered its moral and emotional cost, he is capable of constancy in resolve, despite the haunting horrors that are the price of his determination. He encounters with awareness what steals upon her with surprise. His being confronted with the ever-present past is tragic, hers pathetic. The will to crime is shared, but Macbeth actualizes what she wishes for. Hence, in the failure of Lady Macbeth Shakespeare emphasizes the independence of Macbeth in his pursuit of the consequences of the choice he made his own. Her declining role adds emphasis to the magnitude of his commitment and to his independence. It adds emphasis too to his unfaltering fidelity to that commitment and to the loneliness with which he, like such Shakespearian villains as Edmund, Iago, and Richard III, must experience the futility of his determinedly self-sufficient world of action. What Lady Macbeth symbolizes is the option which Macbeth must consider and does accept at the moment of his fatal choice. Unswerving commitment to that option despite the experience of guilt is another matter; it is what distinguishes his self-destructive tragic integrity from her form of pathetic disintegration. Once the option is examined, accepted in its fulness, and especially once that acceptance is bodied forth in Macbeth's acting upon the necessities consequent to choice, the diminution of Lady Macbeth's role is dramatically essential, while her symbolic function is not impaired.

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[7] D.W. Harding, "Women's Fantasy of Manhood," Shakespeare Quarterly, 20 (1969), p. 246.

This brings us to the second level of response to the question about the relation between her symbolic import and her diminishing role as abetter of Macbeth's manly will. The distancing of Macbeth from the woman who symbolizes the self of his commitment is also dramatically necessary in order to body forth the essential paradox of his tragic situation. This paradox is essentially bound up with the problem of equivocation. As has been argued in Chapter II of this discussion, Macbeth becomes an equivocator with his own humanistic awareness. When he accepts the language of Lady Macbeth and the concept of manliness that it proclaims with univocal clarity, he endeavours equivocally to deceive her better self by alleging the non-existence of the truths that it adheres to. He still perseveres in that endeavour, and the futility of the deceit is constantly made apparent. The contrast between "Good things of the Day begin to droop and drowse,/Whiles Night's black agents to their preys do rouse" (III. ii. 52-53) and "For mine own good,/All causes shall give way" (III. iv. 134-35) exemplifies the antithetical relationship of the languages of the contrary selves. The voice that identifies his deed and determinations with the black agents of Night is not speaking from the same platform of values as the voice that performed the supererogatory task of teaching the murderers the meaning of rugged manliness, and that later defines Night's dark accomplishments as "mine own good." "Good" remains equivocal, not univocal, despite the determination of the equivocator. "Things bad begun make strong themselves by ill" (III. ii. 55) provides a contrary perspective on the matters referred to in "For mine own good . . .". It is evident that Macbeth, despite his commitment and fidelity to the Lady Macbeth option, must inevitably fail to hold the determined shape of the pragmatic Machiavel. He is and is not that chosen self. The more his ethical being insists on uttering its evaluative language, the more the alienation from the self he strives to be is made explicit. Hence, the alienation from Lady Macbeth mirrors the experience of self-loathing, and it is appropriate that the climax of that alienation from her--"She should have died hereafter:/There would have been a time for such a word" (V. v. 17-18)--should coincide with, and introduce, the utterance which articulates his total alienation from the expedient self and its nihilistic universe--"Life's but a walking shadow. . .a tale/Told by an idiot . . . Signifying nothing"

(V. v. 24-28).

What characterizes Macbeth in Act III, Scene ii, is the extremity of his awareness of the cost of his choice and the extremity of his fidelity to that choice. The success wished for by the manly self and acknowledged by the humane self to be unattainable (even "here upon this bank and shoal of time," [I. vii. 6]) has not come with Duncan's surcease:

> We have scorch'd the snake, not kill'd it:
> She'll close and be herself; whilst our poor malice
> Remains in danger of her former tooth.
>
> (III. ii. 13-15)

"We still have judgment here" and "even-handed Justice" (I. vii. 8-10) can intensify the fitful fever of life by threatening retribution in various forms--"Treason . . ., steel, . . . poison,/Malice domestic, foreign levy" (III. ii. 23-25). But this consideration seems anticlimactic after the intensity of

> But let the frame of things disjoint, both the worlds suffer,
> Ere we will eat our meal in fear, and sleep
> In the affliction of these terrible dreams
> That shake us nightly. Better be with the dead,
> Whom we, to gain our peace, have sent to peace,
> Than on the torture of the mind to lie
> In restless ecstasy.
>
> (ll. 16-22)

What these lines suggest is that when, in hours of unregenerative sleep, Macbeth's will is in abeyance, the rejected world of ideals arises to combat the constancy of his resolve. We may be reminded of Banquo's prayer to the "merciful Powers" (II. i. 7) to restrain the insurrection of under-Nature during hours of repose, and can recognize a characteristic Macbeth reversal in that the protagonist, having chosen "ill" as "good," is terrorized by the promptings of great creating Nature, the "chief nourisher in life's feast," which refuses him her "second course" (II. ii. 38-39). The world of good has become his relentless nightmare, and "innocent Sleep" (II. ii. 35), ally of "Pity . . .striding the blast" (I. vii. 21-22), refuses balm to his hurt mind. Just as the vision of the world of terrors depriving him of peace is informed by the realizations that terrified him immediately after the murder of Duncan, so does this vision anticipate the bleakness of the "Tomorrow" soliloquy. Indeed, these lines show us a Macbeth bent upon creating the certainty of the "Tomorrow" view of things. Faced as he is with the horrors of the reality of his choice, and longing for a death that brings, it would seem, no more than the "peace" (III. ii. 20) of release from the madness of life ("restless ecstasy")--a death uninformed by Hamlet's pause-provoking "dreams"--Macbeth refuses to renege on his manly resolution. Giving primacy to the integrity of his choice, he is ready to let "both the worlds suffer," ready to sacrifice the reality he has rejected and the reality he has selected, ready to see all coherence gone from creation, to the point of utter nihilism--"let the frame of things disjoint"--rather than relent or repent.

The utter annihilation of both physical and metaphysical realities has now become the potential goal towards which Macbeth's commitment spurs intent. In comparison with this ruthlessness, Lady Macbeth's theoretical infanticide in Act I, Scene vii seems hardly impressive. Appropriately, even as she hears so dire an utterance, she seems incapable of real comprehension or apt response. Her rejoinder is a poor attempt at dismissing words which have blatantly denied the validity of her vainly reassuring "What's done is done" (II. ii. 12):

> Come on:
> Gentle my Lord, sleek o'er your rugged looks;
> Be bright and jovial among your guests tonight.
> (ll. 28-30)

She who has, in Jorgensen's words, "repeatedly refused to share her husband's visions"[8] cannot now be privy to what he proposes as the cure for his restless ecstasy. How far beyond her ken he has travelled towards the realization of her theory of manliness is revealed in his response to the "be bright and jovial" advice:

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[8] Our Naked Frailties, p. 195.

> So shall I, Love; and so, I pray, be you.
> Let your remembrance apply to Banquo:
> Present him eminence, both with eye and tongue.
> Unsafe the while, that we
> Must lave our honours in these flattering streams,
> And make our faces vizards to our hearts
> Disguising what they are.
>
> (III. ii. 29-35)

The word "Love" rings hollow in the immediate context because it is a verbal vizard to the heart, a worthless drop in the stream of flattery, a form, indeed, of that necessary disguise which is in this very speech revealed to be a painful aspect of his mental torture.[9] The hollowness of the word is further clarified by his use of it in the speeches with the Murderers in the preceding scene. There "love" is associated solely with the necessity for Banquo and Fleance to "embrace the fate" (II. i. 136) determined for them by Macbeth's dark purposes; and fate's agents in this case, by the successful execution of their task, will be grappled to the heart and love of Macbeth (l. 105), who woos them ("I to your assistance do make love"--l. 123) in order that they may imitate his, and Tarquin's, ravishing strides. "Love" then partakes of the nature of those consequences unforeseen by Lady Macbeth, whose spurs to his adopting her vision of the truly virile included the taunt "From this time/Such I account thy love" (I. vii. 38-39), and, thus, underlines her alienation from the full reality of that from which her female nature now recoils.[10] Her parody of courtship in Act I, Scene vii is reflected in his courtship of the Murderers in Act III, Scene i, but now her resolve, weakened by the "Nought's had" experience of the interim, can express itself most aptly in the willingness to allow Banquo and Fleance to live the lease of nature, when she suggests that "in them Nature's copy's not eterne" (l. 38). The contrast between Macbeth's "Come, seeling Night" invocation and her "appeal to him to let well enough, or ill enough, alone"[11] emphasizes the diminution of her role as buttress to his resolve. Hence she must be innocent of the knowledge of "a deed of dreadful note" (l. 44) which evidently (because we remember "all's spent") she cannot be expected wholeheartedly to applaud (l. 46). Having got desire without content, she cannot speak the language of manliness with her husband's dedication. Her "be bright and jovial among your guests" (l. 28) implies a wish for the contentment whose loss she has bemoaned, but Macbeth interprets her words in terms of the necessities of the chosen self. He speaks of "comfort" and jocundity (ll. 39-40) as they relate to his "near'st of life"--comfort and jocundity associated not with her socially reassuring brightness and joviality but with "Night's yawning peal" and "Hecate's summons [to] the shard-born beetle," whose "drowsy hums" (l. 42) are the tonic symbol of the drooping and drowsing of the reality of the ethical self, here associated with the "Good things of Day" (l. 52). But, as the images of darkness indicate, Macbeth's adoption of the language of manliness and his perserverance in using it are never divorced from the awareness of the cost of both choice and tenacity to his better self. "Come, seeling Night" is a more aware equivalent of "Stop up th' access and passage to remorse" (I. v. 44) and represents the will to be freed of that vision of things afforded by the eye that dared not look again upon the "horror" of butchered Duncan. It is an invocation whose denial is dramatized in the centrality of the diction of vision to the most intense moments of the Banquet-Scene:

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[9] See McAlindon, p. 231, where he follows Knight and Brooks in commenting on Macbeth's hatred of hypocrisy.

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[10] See Harding, "Women's Fantasy of Manhood," p. 248.

[11] Nevo, Tragic Form in Shakespeare, pp. 241-42.

> Ay, and a bold [man], that dare *look* *on* that
> Which might appal the Devil.
>
> (ll. 58-59)
>
> When all'd done,
> You *look* but on a stool.
> Pr'ythee, *see* there!
> *Behold*! *look*! lo! how say you?
>
> (ll. 66-68)
>
> If I stand here, I *saw* him.
>
> (l. 73)
>
> Avaunt! and quit my *sight*! Let the earth *hide* thee!
> . . . .
> Thou hast *no* *speculation* *in* *those* *eyes*
> Which thou dost *glare* with.
>
> (ll. 92-95; emphasis mine)

There the frustration of the prayer to "*seeling* Night" and the undercutting of the willed contriving of a Machiavellian "clearness" (III. i. 32) from association with Banquo's murder are climaxed--as if physical dissociation alone were material to the obviating of guilt. Macbeth experienced fully the futility of this naive attempt to confine the meaning of "guilt" to "criminal evidence" when, in his reaction to the "great quell" of regicide, his awareness of moral responsibility overrode the will to deny culpability as it is reflected in his Pilate-like hand-washing. Thus, the magnitude of Macbeth's relentless commitment and the magnitude of its folly--that is, the inevitability of frustration concomitant with commitment--are intrinsic to the structure as well as the action of the Lady Macbeth panel of the introductory triptych, preceding the murder scene, as they are to the structure of the central unit as a whole.

Appropriately, the murder scene itself has a similar triadic structure which has the same decorous relationship with the unfolding theme of frustration. The scene opens with notes of controversy and uncertainty arising from the presence of the mysterious third murderer, whose arrival is a manifestation of the protagonist's struggle for security, or perfection, in the fulfilment of his design, and also serves as prelude to the hero's later insistence on making "assurance double sure" (IV. i. 83). The brief dialogue of contention leads to a moment of extreme quiet, similar in kind and in function to that provided in Bernardo's lines spoken before the first entrance of the ghost in Hamlet,[12] a moment in which we are made aware of the doom of day's last glimmering streaks (l. 5) before their defeat by Night's strangling (II. iv. 7) evil. These are lines that recall the choric commentary of Rosse and the Old Man, who interpreted Nature's outrage at the "unnatural . . . deed that's done" (II. iv. 10-11), and so define in the same terms the unnaturalness of the deed now to be done and imply the need for more such outrages as milestones along the frustrating path towards security. "Hark! I hear horses" (l. 8) begins the second movement, which ends with Fleance's escape. Even here, the necessary attention to horses--"Hark! I hear horses" and "His horses go about"--prepared for by Macbeth's earlier query, "Is't far you ride?" and the subsequent concern with equine speed and sureness of foot (III. i. 23, 25, 34 and 37), remind us of the symbolic chaos evidenced in the "turn[ing] wild in nature" of Duncan's steeds, and suggests, once again, the unnaturalness of what is now perpetrated, and associates

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[12] Both Bernardo (Hamlet, I. i. 35-39) and the first Murderer draw our attention to the heavens, making the expected earthly event take on the impact of the metaphysical. Both speakers and their confederates are members of a watch. In Hamlet the watch guards against evil in whatever form; in Macbeth the watch's role is to safeguard Macbeth's evil world, to destroy the good in whatever form, physical or metaphysical. Each speech is followed by events that reflect the major concerns of the play. Hamlet deals with the problem of the good man's setting the times aright in the chaos of experience. Macbeth deals with the problem of the good man who chooses chaos as his realm of being, striving to create of it a world suitable to his dire intent.

Macbeth's will with the animalistic fury that he himself will later echo in "They have tied me to a stake" (V. vii. i). The final movement of the scene comprises another brief dialogue between the Murderers; they voice pragmatic reflections on the hoped-against "rubs" and "botches" in their work (III. i. 133), and decide to report their qualified success to Macbeth. The movement of the scene is in keeping with the intention-deed-frustration experience embodied in the play as a whole, and prepares us for the climax of frustration which is the matter of the ensuing scene (Act III, Scene iv). The Murderers' final lines, "Well, let's away,/And say how much is done" (ll. 22-23) resound with ironic echoes of the foresight informing the "If it were done, when 'tis done" meditation of Macbeth and the deliberate short-sightedness of Lady Macbeth's "What's done is done" assertion, and, thus, reemphasizes the theme of failure.

What occurs in the murder-of-Banquo scene must be viewed in the light of the terms for success established by Macbeth in his instructions to the Murderers, because then he strove to convert them to identification with his world view as much as to the doing of the deed itself. Defining, as it were, the values and the order of his perverse private universe, and essaying to give it its own peculiar order and coherence, in an endeavour to displace, not restore, that which he has destroyed, he uses an Erasmian analogy[13] between men and dogs with characteristic inversion. Erasmus, in his Colloquia, uses the analogy to reach a humanistic conclusion about the "unspeakable variety" of "Wolves and Dogs"[14] discoverable in what the humanist's "valu'd file" would include "i' th' worst rank of manhood" (III. i. 102). Macbeth uses the analogy for contrary purposes, to establish a "valu'd file" that would suggest what one could identify as the brutish manliness of a Richard III or the rugged prowess of a Pyrrhus[15] as the epitome of what ranks high in the "perfect" (l. 107) world of manly, ungospell'd impatience (l. 86). The military quality of Macbeth's language is remarkable: it is apparent in his emphasis on the "file" of the worthy, the "rank"of the manly, on the desirability of combatting fortune (implicit in "it was he . . . which held you so under fortune") and his choice of image in depicting the opposition between him and Banquo in terms of the "bloody distance" separating combatants whose "thrusts" (ll. 115-117) are those of men

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[13] The Arden editor, following John D. Rea, "Notes on Shakespeare," Modern Language Notes, 35 (1920), 377-78, draws

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attention to this parallel.

[14] See the colloquy "Lover of Glory," in The Colloquies of Erasmus, trans. Craig R. Thompson (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1965), pp. 485-86.

[15] The ruthlessness of Richard III is constantly associated with the imagery of animality; Dighton and Forrest, the assassins of the princes, are referred to by Tyrrel as "fleshed villains, bloody dogs" (IV. iii. 6). In Hamlet Pyrrhus' relentlessness resembles Macbeth's fell purpose, and is appropriately associated with the "blackness," "ruggedness," maliciousness and demonic destructiveness (Hamlet, II. ii. 438-484) of tyranny and with the pride of the insensitive heart (Lucrece, 1449, 1465).

championed to the utterance. Here we see the release of soldierly self-sufficiency from all sanctions save the demands of that "honour" which is defined in antithesis to the cowardice of lily-liver'd boys (V. iii. 15) and to the lack of heroic rashness evidenced in hearts white with infirmity of purpose (II. i. 51). Here is a use of language that recalls the purposefulness of the utterance "Bring forth men-children only" (I. vii. 73) and exemplifies the determination to find sufficiency in the "corporal" world of valour as good per se. Macbeth adopts this amoral pose and uses his Machiavellian rhetoric in an effort to insure the destruction of Banquo, and by that destruction to defeat the reality which keeps him poorly lost in those thoughts whose bands he must cancel and tear to pieces if he is to achieve his desired freedom and wholeness.

Macbeth's choice of the world of corporeality is echoed in the command to insure that Fleance embrace his father's fate because the "absence" of the boy (whose potential rather than whose being is feared) "is not less material" to the dread design. Though "material" is here used in the sense of "important, or of great consequence" it is endowed with another and very significant meaning by the wider context of the play. Macbeth strives for perfection in his chosen state of self-fulfilment, as he confesses now, while hoping for success, and later, when that hope proves to be a delusion--

> [We] wear our health but sickly in his life,
> Which in his death were *perfect*
>
> (III. i. 106-107)

and

> I had else been *perfect*;
> Whole as the marble, founded as the rock
>
> (III. iv. 20-21;
> emphasis mine)

What he seeks is the elimination of the state of fear by means of the elimination of a *material* fact, and this gives the word added meaning. Out of this dimension of the word's meaning emerges the powerful irony of the frustration of Macbeth's design on the level of both the worlds. Fleance, as physical fact, achieves an "absence" unwilled by Macbeth, escaping from Forres and, thus, manifesting the limits of the protagonist's control over physical reality. Banquo,effaced as physical fact, is to re-emerge as the metaphysical truth that cannot be suppressed, however perfect Macbeth may wish its denial to be. And, as a minor example of the frustration theme, the Murderers, despite his didactic disquisition on fortune, manhood and royal love and despite his avowal that Banquo is an evil they are to destroy, refuse to undertake the bloody business put in their bosoms (III. i. 103) on the advocated basis: theirs is the recklessness and weariness of men quite prepared to let both the worlds suffer, convinced that the incensing "vile blows and buffets of the world" (l. 108) and the disastrous tuggings of fortune (l. 111) are without all remedy. Hence, they undertake their assignment as a physical act that is without any significance other than the occasion to spite a meaningless world and, in every sense of the word, are "reckless" (l. 109) about possibilities of achieving the "perfect" health (l. 106) their employer seeks.

The attitudes of the Murderers are a proleptic echo of those of the doomed Macbeth of Act V. The first Murderer's phrase "weary with disasters" (l. 111) anticipates "I 'gin to be aweary of the sun,/And wish the estate o' th' world were now undone" (V. v. 49-50), just as the second Murderer's willingness to "set [his] life on any chance/To mend it, or be rid on't" (III. i. 112-113) anticipates "This push/Will cheer me ever, or disseat me now" (V. iii. 20-21). Their condition is that of despair or desperateness, and this contrasts with Macbeth's present destructive hope. But their nihilism prefigures what his own is to be, and it is appropriate that it should, for Macbeth himself in his challenge to fate, has already prepared us for the possibility of his realizing in himself their reckless hopelessness. Hence what occurs in the murder-scene is informed by the precise directions offered by Macbeth to the assassins in Act III, Scene i, as well as by the protagonist's desire to win these men to communion with his world view. In more ways than one Macbeth has "lost/Best half of [his] affair" (III. i. 20-21) and gained unhoped-for frustration of his needs.

In Act III, Scene iv, the Banquet-Scene, which forms the third panel of the central triptych, the theme of retribution is brought to a climax on every level--of incident, language and idea, as well as structure. Here we find the most complete dramatic expression of what it means "to know my deed" and the most vehement assertion of "'twere best not to know myself" in the rejection of that knowledge as nothing but "initiate fear" and "self-abuse" (ll. 141-42). Thus the scene embodies the decision-deed-frustration cycle as an infernal unending circle.

Structurally, the scene has three major divisions, consisting of a rising action, climaxed by the first entrance of Banquo's ghost, an extended crisis (itself structured in three phases) which ends with the ghost's final exit, and a falling action that shows Macbeth's descent from terror to an insane renewal of commitment to his obsession. This last serves, in the over-all design of the play, as prologue to the Macduff movement of the tragedy, wherein the protagonist chooses his third symbol of the rejected self that is to be destroyed--thus choosing his final mode of failure.

The characteristic mood of the Banquet Scene is determined by the to-fro sway of Macbeth's consciousness between the inescapable reality he would deny and the insufficient reality he would, at any cost, assert. This is evident in what I have called the rising action of the scene.

On the one hand, we see that, with his guests, as he engages in "play[ing] the humble host"--wearing the "false face" of affability that is vizard to a heart which loathes the necessity of such hypocrisy (III. ii. 32 ff.)--Macbeth's ironic technique of lying like truth reflects back on him with keener irony: when he remarks

> Here had we now our country's honour roof'd,
> Were the grac'd person of our Banquo present
> (ll. 39-40)

he is paying easily-afforded lip-service to conventional notions of honour and grace, knowing as he does that the material threat of Banquo cannot now prevail. But the audience can hardly fail to notice that conventional notions of honour and grace are the notions that determine the view of significant being particular to the ethical self. On the other hand, when he learns from the first Murderer of Fleance's escape, Macbeth reaffirms his sincere commitment to the reality of the physical; he speaks the lie of his chosen truth by referring in univocal terms to the "venom" (l. 29) which, in the language of another view of things, he called "royalty of nature." Consistent in idea and image with the language of that self which will rather "let the frame of things disjoint" (III. ii. 16) than acknowledge the utter insufficiency of the "peace" (III. ii. 20) which Banquo's wisdom and valour ruined with fear, Macbeth's lines,

> There the grown *serpent* lies; the *worm*, that's fled,
> Hath nature that in time will *venom* breed,
> No teeth for th' present
>
> (III. iv. 28-30; emphasis mine)

not only echo his declaration that the thoughts which refused to die with them they think on (III. ii. 10-11) are a "scorch'd" *snake*, not a dead one, whose "former tooth" still threatens to destroy, but establish an identity between the death of Banquo and the death of a habitual framework of thought. Implicit in the use of the snake-serpent-worm imagery is the idea of paradisaical peace, a sufficient--a perfect--wholeness, a world of good threatened by evil. But the "good" is the world and values of Macbeth's fatal choice, an anti-world, or chaos, of his creation, to which the "ill" world of ideal harmony and justice is a vicious threat. The inversion of the Genesis symbolism serves but to reinforce the deliberate distortion that informs the "valu'd file" argument of the Persuasion Scene (III. i. 71 ff.) and to underline the futility of the aspiration to Edenic freedom from fits, starts, ecstasy and, especially, those habitual thoughts that are the real threat to Macbeth's "near'st of life." Thus, as humble host, Macbeth plays a role that repeats the ironic impact of his earlier protestation to Duncan, "The service and loyalty I owe/. . . pays itself" (I. iv. 22-23), the lie dictated by the will revealing the truth of his worthier self; and, as patron of not-quite-"the best o' th' cutthroats," Macbeth reveals, through inversion, the truth of his derelict, unprimrosy way of life. It is a dramatic inevitability, then, that truth should clash with, and undercut, truth in the prolonged crisis of Act III, Scene iv, as Shakespeare contrives the great climax of ambivalence.

The impact of the appearance of Banquo's ghost upon Macbeth is carefully prepared for and heightened by the quality of assertion that restates the protagonist's commitment to the physical as the real in his response to the news of Fleance's escape:

> Then comes my fit again: I had else been perfect;
> Whole as the marble, founded as the rock,
> As broad and general as the casing air:
> But now, I am cabin'd, cribb'd, confin'd, bound in
> To saucy doubts and fears.--But Banquo's safe?
>
> (ll. 20-24)

In these lines Macbeth re-states the self-dividing dialectic of antithetical realities,[16] the tensions between the world of rejected "good," here recognized in "comes my fit again," and the world of selected "good," here referred to in "I had . . . been perfect." What strikes us is the employment of imagery of palpability appropriate to the choice of the reality of the physical, appropriate because of the appeal to the security of the palpable but also because of the mode of behaviour implicit in the chosen images. For example, the amplification of "I had else been perfect" is couched in imagery that draws our attention to Macbeth's perfection as an anti-world or chaos.

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[16] See Nevo, Tragic Form: "His reception of the news of Fleance's escape restates the vicious, soul-destroying dialectic of fantasy and reality . . . .The dream and the reality, that which he wished to be and that which he is, are placed in extreme oppositions; the dream is further off than ever, the present bondage more irksome than ever" (pp. 242-43).

"Whole as the marble" obviously reflects Macbeth's desire for constancy, for security, in his world of material facts and for a release from the metaphysical world of fear and ecstasy. That this is so is apparent if, in order to confirm our assumptions about the function of the phrase, we were to seek the wider connotations of "marble" in the pre-Macbeth works of Shakespeare. Then we would discover that the kind of marble wholeness Macbeth desires is usually associated with ideas and images of direness which reappear in Macbeth--images such as "tiger" and "fiend" and, constantly, the idea of tyranny. For example, Lear rails against ingratitude as "a marble-hearted fiend" as he accuses Goneril (I. iv. 250). Duke Vincentio, in Measure for Measure, telling of Angelo's obduracy in rejecting his betrothed, Mariana, pictures him as "marble to her tears . . . [relenting] not" (III. i. 224). In 3 Henry VI, the King celebrates Queen Margaret's powers of persuasion by claiming that her "moving words . . . sighs . . . tears" can "pierce a marble heart," But that wholeness evades Macbeth even on the level of the physical: Fleance has escaped, so that Macbeth's control of the world of fact, which is also control of his destiny, is incomplete, though to a lesser extent than his control of insistent, recurrent ideas symbolized in Banquo's ghost. The amplification of Macbeth's idea of desired perfection includes the phrase "founded as the rock," and this too appeals to an antithetical system of values which suggests the delusive quality of the protagonist's role as anti-creator. St. Matthew tells of Christ's drawing an analogy between the person who hears His words and does them and the wise man who builds his house on a rock, making it impervious to rain, flood and beating winds "because it was founded on a rock."[17] Macbeth having heard, and chosen as his, "words" whose meaning reflects values opposite to what Christ identified as the wisdom of the law and the prophets, suggests, in "founded as the rock," the determination to transpose "all saws of books" into the language of will, and to establish an enduring, or even obdurate, reality impervious to the buffetings of traditional--in this case, biblical--associations that cause the words uttered to implode, as it were, and become nothing.

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[17] The Gospel of St. Matthew, vii. 25. This is the famous "measure for measure" chapter, whose influence on Measure for Measure has been thoroughly noted. How much it informs the texture of Macbeth it is not my intention to discuss, but its comments on hypocrisy, on giving dogs what is holy, on the lesson of personal example which teaches men how to treat one, on the wolf in sheep's clothing, and on the growth of figs, thistles, good and bad trees, etc. suggest it as an imaginative influence, as opposed to source, on much in the play.

In the case of the third term of the amplificatio based on "perfect," the concept of a freedom "as broad and general as the casing air" (l. 22), which may have in it connotations of invulnerability such as those provided by Marcellus in Hamlet (I. i. 145), our experience of the play thus far makes us question the adequacy of the assertion. The broad and general casing air is as much the element of the Witches as is the blasted heath--they vanish into and ride upon it--but it is also the element where "heaven's Cherubins" ride on "sightless couriers" to provoke universal pity at the doing of a deed whose significance transcends mere palpability. Hence the appeal to the freedom of the air which confines the physical world is an appeal, unintended, but for that the more striking, to realities that cannot be so easily cased in to the local and temporal. Therefore, Macbeth's declaration that Fleance's escape keeps him imprisoned within the possibilities of physical dangers, "cabin'd, cribb'd, confin'd, bound in/To saucy doubts and fears" (ll. 23-24) can be seen as a definition of the effects of his own confining of his desires to the limitations of physical reality. It is this that gives such ironic appropriateness to Macduff's great threat to "crib and confine" Macbeth in a cage wherein he may "live to be the show and gaze o' th' time" as a rare monster of tyranny (V. viii. 23-27), for that, though Macbeth violently rejects such tomorrows, is the perfect image of the world of his choice.

Yet for the nonce Macbeth can be jocund, can play the courteous host and give ceremonial sauce to banquet viands, can speak of "grace'd" Banquo and of Scotland's "honour" roofed within his hall, because the problem of Fleance can wait until the morrow (l. 30) and because the death of Banquo is, in the reality of fact, an accomplishment free of all "if it were done" perplexities and, so, a thing devoid of fear. Banquo, "with twenty trenched gashes on his head;/The least a death to nature" (ll. 26-27) is "safe" (l. 24). Invited by Lady Macbeth "to give the cheer" (l. 32), Macbeth thanks her, his "sweet remembrancer" (l. 36), and it is at this very point, according to the first Folio, that Banquo's ghost, the remembrancer of the non-physical world, of Nature, of the virtue of the Ethical Macbeth, enters to unman him.

The war between will and vision, between untrammeled valour and the cowardice that is conscience, between physical and metaphysical now rages with the intensity of the epic battle between merciless Macdonwald and worthy Glamis at the beginning of the play. It is a war of three distinct phases, and it is a war of words throughout which the language of Machiavellian pragmatism rings with ironic hollowness. In the first phase Lady Macbeth is the spokesman for the language of intrepidity, when in manner of her "cat i' th' adage" ploy she dismisses the "strange infirmity" that smothers function in all too inescapable surmise (I. iii. 141) as nothing:

> O proper stuff!
> This is the very painting of your fear:
> This is the air-drawn dagger, which, you said,
> Led you to Duncan. O! these flaws and starts
> (Impostors to true fear), would well become
> A woman's story at a winter's fire,
> Authoris'd by her grandam. Shame itself!
> Why do you make such faces? When all's done,
> You look but on a stool.
>
> (III. iv. 59-67)

But what to her is nothing, first because, like Gertrude in the closet-scene she and the guests do not see the spectre and, second, because as I have earlier suggested, she fails to distinguish between the imaginary and the imaginative, is to Macbeth something of great consequence. It is so because like the play's audience he does see Banquo and because the spectre's presence gives the lie to his assumption of qualified perfection in his chosen state of being revealed in "Banquo's safe." The horrid image that painted itself fearfully in the imagination of Macbeth at the first thought of murdering the good (I. iii. 135) is now a veritable stage-presence, accusingly forcing him back to the ploy of interpreting "guilt" as mere criminal evidence and to the insistence that physical distance from a horrid deed is innocence: "Thou canst not say, I did it: never shake/Thy gory locks at me" (ll. 49-50). The insufficiency of this apologia is evident from his earlier effort to win the Murderers to oneness with his own views. That was an attempt to make them one with him and, thereby, to make the guilt at least partially and, if possible, wholly theirs. That attempt proved self-defeating at the time and again, as the audience has seen, in the murder scene itself: their attack on Banquo is impersonal and unprincipled, as they admitted it would be; it is merely the reckless rhetoric of desperadoes howling in spite and, thus, saying nothing.

Macbeth's self-defence in terms of the reality of the physical ("Thou canst not say, I did it"), implying the assertion that a moral universe peopled by "heaven's cherubins" horsed, as knights of justice, does not exist, is inane. The futility of such an assertion is reinforced by Lady Macbeth's interpreting his renewed encounter with the timeless knowledge of the nature of guilt as momentary fit (l. 54) and by her resuming the argument of the decision-making scene ("Are you a man?" [l. 57]), as if neither of them had encountered the "Nought's had, all's spent" realizations that filled in the intervening gap of time. Her attempt to reassure the guests with "My Lord is often thus, /And hath been from his youth" (ll. 52-53) suggests to the play's audience that the "illness" which she avers is momentary, is indeed the evidence of Macbeth's habitual knowledge of moral truth. This suggestion is reinforced later in the scene when she begs the guests to "think of this, . . .But as a thing of custom" (ll. 95-96; emphasis mine). Hence, her chiding ("Shame itself! Why do you make such faces?" [ll. 65-66]) draws our attention to the defeat of Macbeth's hypocritical intent, in that these faces are not the Machiavel's vizards to the heart (III. ii. 34): they reveal, not disguise, what the heart knows. "Shame," then, transcends the singleness of purpose with which Lady Macbeth uses it, transcends the univocality of "I shame/To wear a heart so white" (II. ii. 63-64), and reveals its validity as an expression connoting what Rosse implies in his symbolic utterance about the "day's shame" (II. iv. 8) in the choric commentary on Nature's response to good Duncan's death.

Mindless of the inadequacy of her language, Lady Macbeth attempts, with well-nigh inane singleness of purpose, to restore her husband to the condition demanded by the exigencies of her concept of manliness. Terming his visionary raptness an "impostor" fear, she contrasts it with "true fear" --presumably that of "cream fac'd loons" and "lily-liver'd boys" (V. iii. 15). By her emphasis on Macbeth's flaws and starts as mere imposters she dismisses their cause as nothing but an artifact of dubious fantasy. Hence the basis of his fear is for her of no more warranty or substance than the childish female terrors elicited by a winter's tale. Unaware of the spiritual presence of Banquo, whose reality Macbeth perceives as all too real, she can confidently assert that the palpable and empty stool is the full reality of the present (l. 67). But Macbeth's "Behold! look! lo! how say you?" demands that she acknowledge the validity of a vision that perceives more than the corporeal reality she champions, and invites the reflection in words ("how say you?") that meaningfully reflect both the perception and the reality. This very demand, forced from him by the awful and awesome experience, momentarily reveals his awareness of an ethical and linguistic wholeness superior to, because more real than, the relativistic finitude of an amoral world of palpable realities and determinedly univocal words. But the revelation is momentary only. When Lady Macbeth answers his challenge with silence, he immediately reneges on what he has just affirmed and demanded. His next words, directed to the ghost rather than to his dearest partner in greatness, express amazement that the fact of death cannot be confined to the reality of unperturbing stools, and demand that rightness of his amazement be denied:

> Why, what care I? If thou canst nod, speak too.--
> If charnel-houses and our graves must send
> Those that we bury, back, our monuments
> Shall be the maws of kites.
>
> (ll. 69-72)

Of course, this is folly: the maws of kites give no more secure tenure to the "royalty of nature," the prudence, the honour and integrity of Banquo, or truer still, to the universal principles mirrored in these qualities of the once living Banquo, than can the ditch wherein his corpse was said to bide "safe."

Like Lady Macbeth, the ghost does not reply. Like the Witches, when they were charged to speak further (I. iii. 78) of the source of their "strange intelligence" (I. iii. 73), the ghost, silent, vanishes. Lady Macbeth's silence in response to "Behold! look! lo! how say you?" (l 68) is difficult to interpret. It may be that she refuses to look at what we know she cannot see. It may be that she refuses to speak further of what she knows to be an empty stool. It may be--and this is more probable--that she has no choice but to remain silent because Macbeth, preoccupied with the spectral Banquo, ignores her presence even as he says "how say you?" The ghost's silence is more mysterious than hers and of greater dramatic import, for it leaves Macbeth to interpret what the vision signifies and to define himself in the decision-making consequent on that interpretation. This leaving all speaking, thinking, saying and doing to Macbeth by a ghost that seems to bear all the marks of the physical reality of Banquo's corpse--"gory locks" (l. 50), "twenty mortal murthers on [his crown]" (l. 80), marrowless bones, cold blood and eyes without speculation (ll. 93-94)--underscores the importance of the thought, words and deeds of Macbeth that make up the primary action of the scene, the inner action. Though to explain the ghost's actuality may be as problematic as attempts to explain the reality of the ghost of King Hamlet,[18] the problem is a minor one in our experience of the play. The ghost is. The ghost is Macbeth's encounter with the reality of Banquo's death as "murther," as a deed involving him in guilt. The ghost elicits a reaction against the validity of its appearance, a demand that it conform to the palpable reality that Macbeth would have as his be-all and end-all. Whether the ghost is merely a product of Macbeth's imagination, or whether his presence can be plausibly explained by reference to popular theological or demonological beliefs, or whether he may be a Senecan ghost slightly dissociated from the conventions of revenge is of no concern in the text: that it is the occasion for an encounter with an unwanted and unattended reality is of concern, for Macbeth's ponderings and assertions on the occasion of its two appearances in this scene prove it so: Banquo pushes Macbeth from the stool of his momentary security and this leads to the tragedy of the hardened heart.

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[18] Curry, in *Shakespeare's Philosophical Patterns* sees the ghost, like the dagger, as an infernal apparition whose purpose is to confound Macbeth, in Hamlet's words, "abusing [him] to damn [him]" (see p. 85). J.C. Maxwell, "The Ghost from the Grave:A Note on Shakespeare's Apparitions," *Durham University Journal*, 17 (1956), p. 58, takes a leaf from King James's *Daemonologie* and suggests that it is "the real dead body" of Banquo, transported by demonic power to the banquet table. Jorgensen, *Our Naked Frailties*, pp. 124-125, follows Curry and supports his doing so by referring to Ludwig Lavater's *Of Ghostes and Spirits Walking by Night*, Englished by R.H. (1572), ed. J. Dover Wilson and May Yardley (Oxford, 1929), p. 128, where the apparition of a ghost "berayde in blood" is recounted. "The Devil, as God's punitive agent, deserves much of the credit," according to Jorgensen (p. 125).

The hardening of the heart begins when the ghost disappears for the first time, and Macbeth is relieved that its presence no longer confounds the solid, confined reality of stools. This is the beginning of the second phase of the central drama of the banquet scene. Reasserting the self of his decision, Macbeth continues to reflect on the strangeness of death's transcending the blows that should end all here, as if he had never considered that such blows can never be an "end-all" even upon the bank of time, and as if he had never known of "angels trumpet-tongu'd" (I. vii. 4-7, 19):

> Blood hath been shed ere now, i' th' olden time,
> Ere humane statute purg'd the gentle weal;
> Ay, and since too, murthers have been perform'd
> Too terrible for the ear: the time has been,
> That, when the brains were out, the man would die,
> And there an end; but now, they rise again,
> With twenty mortal murthers on their crowns,
> And push us from our stools. This is more strange
> Than such a murther is.
>
> (III. iv. 74-82)

The reference to the history of murder in pre-civilized and civilized ages seems to imply a distinction between murder with impunity and murder attended by the terror associated therewith by humane concerns. If so, there is an implicit recognition here that Macbeth's chosen world of manly perfection would, ideally, be that of primitive savagery. It is such a world that Macbeth tries to recreate when he decides, in the closing lines of Act III, Scene iv, to wade deeper still in blood, to let savage instinct outrun the pauser reason, and to convert strange impulse into horrid deeds "which must be acted, ere they may be scann'd" (III. iv. 139). There is also a denial of the experience of recent history--his own--in "the time has been,/That, when the brains were out, the man would die,/And these an end," for though Duncan's body made no spectral appearances, there were voices echoing throughout all the house that belied the present finality of "there an end." The hardening of the heart is therefore a process of deliberate forgetfulness--a distancing of memory that is to prove of no more avail than the distancing of Banquo's murder from his own bloody hands. Such forgetfulness is essential to the recovery of the manly self, and it is appropriate that when Macbeth recovers to play the role of humble host, or affable Machiavel, he should begin his excuses with "I do forget" (l. 83).

Willed forgetfulness of customary truths gives place to blind adherence to the language and the truths of expediency in the speech with which Macbeth proposes his "love and health to all" toast, with which the second phase ends:

> Do not muse at me, my most worthy friends,
> I have a strange infirmity, which is nothing
> To those that know me.
> . . . .
> I drink to th' general joy o' th' whole table,
> And to our dear friend Banquo, whom we miss;
> Would he were here!
>
> (III. iv. 84-90)

"Strange infirmity" recalls "[we] wear our health but sickly in [Banquo's] life" and, thus, suggests the deliberate inversion of "good and "ill" in the relativistic world of the manly will. "Nothing" denies the reality of the ghost which made him pale with fear. And "Would he were here" suggests a freedom from remorse impossible when Macbeth was younger in deed (cf. III. iv. 143) and was forced to utter "Wake Duncan with thy knocking: I would thou couldst!" (II. ii. 73). Yet the tension between the knowledge of the heart and the confined, circumscribed knowledge of the will makes the impact of this very speech ambivalent, and emphasizes the ironic rightness of Banquo's appearing precisely as Macbeth mouths the words "Would he were here!" This tension is suggested especially by the possibility that "nothing to those that know me" may be not only a reassuring lie to comfort the disconcerted guests but also a jibe at Lady Macbeth as unambivalent champion of his chosen truth and blind witness of its insufficiency. Her "What! quite unmann'd in folly?" and "Fie! for shame!" (ll. 72-73), like her earlier " A foolish thought to say a sorry sight" (II. ii. 21), have that insufficiency which is the strength of weakness of vision. Thus, as a private ironic mockery of his wife's restricted manliness, "nothing" implies the admission of the validity of that reality which cannot be reduced to nothing. The ghost's second appearance, then, is an affirmation of the validity of the ironic jibe, just as it is a mockery of

Macbeth's desperately sincere attempt to persuade himself that the vision was nothing.

In the third phase of the spectre business, when the ghost reappears, Macbeth tries to escape from the ambivalent reaction to the ghost's presence. He does so by reaffirming his commitment to the reality of his choice. This reaffirmation manifests itself in unequivocal demands that the ghost conform to the laws of physical reality, first in "Let the earth hide thee!" (l. 92) and then in the proposal that the re-appearing ghost conform to the implications of the physical as the real. He who once spoke of daring to "do all that may become a man" in terms of criteria of behaviour established since "humane statute purg'd the gentle weal" now draws on his "whole as the marble" weaponry to defeat the impalpable real:

> What man dare, I dare:
> Approach thou like the rugged Russian bear,
> The arm'd rhinoceros, or th' Hyrcan tiger;
> Take any shape but that, and my firm nerves
> Shall never tremble: or, be alive again,
> And dare me to the desert with thy sword;
> If trembling I inhabit then, protest me
> The baby of a girl. Hence, horrible shadow!
> Unreal mock'ry, hence!--
> [*Ghost disappears*]
> Why so;--being gone,
> I am a man again.
>
> (III. iv. 98-107)

Exultant in the rhetoric of concrete manliness, here "purg'd" of all connection with gentleness and mercy and humane bonds, Macbeth dismisses Banquo's ghost as nothing, as insubstantial shadow, as unreal mockery. The coincidence of the spirit's vanishing (or its "gentle" obedience to the desperate behest, which wittily contrasts the savagery of the wrathful soldier, Macbeth, with the civilized behaviour of his antithesis Banquo, the Christian Soldier) seems to yield the victory to him who is the courageous man again. But the rhetoric of manliness, which proclaims the shapes of the chosen real as those of physically daunting bear, rhinoceros and tiger, and of customary martial opponent, implicitly champions the confining of " courage" to the fierce daring that is free of all connection with the ethical. The divorce of the word "courage" from the context of morality is effected in Macbeth's reference to "trembling" as the antithesis of courage. The trembling he speaks of is that of the "baby" of a girl," not of the terror-striken Macbeth who is appalled at the sight of a spectral Banquo,that "shadow," that fantastical mockery, that reflection of what, according to the implications of his choice, cannot be. Thus, Macbeth plays the role of self-deceiving equivocator, using the ploy of mental reservation, as it were, to deceive himself, to deny the reality of the ghost--indeed the reality of the ethical self, of which the ghost is a shadow or sign--in order to support the cause of the manly self.

It is ironic that the consolidation of Macbeth's victory over the reality of the visionary self should begin as the banquet is interrupted and the guests depart in disorder, for the disarray is a dramatic symbol of the chaos that is the chosen order of the hero's willed reality. It is further ironic, and wholly appropriate, that the consolidation of his victory should be also an acknowledgement of defeat. Before his decision to murder Duncan, Macbeth had recognized that retributive justice is inescapable in this world (I. vii. 1 ff.). This recognition is echoed by him now as his amazed guests depart, when he meditates on how Nature mysteriously brings forth the guilt of "the secret'st man of blood" (III. iv. 125)[19] to plague him not only with the return of bloody instructions (I. vii. 9-10) but, worse still, with terrifying universal echoes of the virtues he has outraged. Before his committing the crime of regicide he voiced his fear lest the "sure and firm-set earth" (II. i. 56) cry out to define the contemplated deed as "Horror" not "business" and thus cancel it before its enactment. Now, on the point of contemplating this aspect of Nature's revelatory and moral function, Macbeth abridges his meditation in order to return to matters appropriate to the world of time and place--"What is the night?" (l. 125)--and, thus, to blind the mind's eye to the metaphysical, to the truths of his deepest awareness. His hardening of heart is shown in this refusal to allow the echoes of past truths their full reverberations. But the very resonance of past insights suggests the inescapability of past awareness and qualifies the victorious rejection of the ghost as nothing. Now, Macbeth determines that the good for which he sacrificed his questioning moral self shall be an absolute. This is evident at the end of Act III, Scene iv when he chooses to attribute his flaws and starts in the presence of the ghost to the "initiate fear" (l. 142) of the heroic novice and terms that fear "self-abuse" (l. 141). If that fear is an abuse of the self, as he avers, and if that fear is, as the audience knows, insight into the moral dimensions of human deeds, then it is the inhumane self which has been abused by insistent moral awareness. Macbeth determines to allow that self to mature into hardness, by determining to "bend up/Each corporal agent" to further terrible feats (I. vii. 80-81):

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[19] "It will have blood, they say: blood will have blood" seems, at first, to suggest that the balance of the sentence holds in equilibrium synonymous expressions. But the thrust of the passage as a whole would seem to suggest that "it" is not a pronoun for "blood" but refers to that force in creation which gives motion (or, perhaps, "move" means persuasion) to stones and tongues to trees (l. 122) and which endows "augures . . . understood relations, . . . magot-pies, . . . choughs, and rooks" (ll. 123-24) with meanings which the secret'st man of blood would fain deny and cannot. Sanders , in Shakespeare and the Received Idea (p. 267) says "it" refers to "the dynamic moral order" or, perhaps, to "that great bond."

> For mine own good,
> All causes shall give way: I am in blood
> Stepp'd in so far, that should I wade no more,
> Returning were as tedious as go o'er.

of the futile tomorrows (ll. 131-34) will inform unanalyzed, unpremeditated deeds that are the "firstlings of [the hardened] heart" (IV. i. 146-48). The hardness of mature manliness, these lines imply, will insure that what's done is truly done, at least to the extent of being unattended by "ifs" conjured up by the abusive suggestions of the traditional ethical awareness[22] of a Macbeth whose good was defined in terms of justice of cause, service and loyalty--with Duncan as symbol of ethical authority, Banquo as symbol of ethical behaviour, and Macduff as symbol of the language and ideas associated with such authority and behaviour.

In the statement which announces the mode of future action, "Strange things I have in head, that will to hand,/ Which must be acted, ere they may be scann'd," Macbeth associates his ethical relativism with the role of the actor in a manner that embryonically presents his later reflections on the parallel between his "way of life" and the condition of the strutting ineffectual player. The statement draws upon the commonplace analogy that enables us to discover a correspondence between man as actor-player on the stage and man as actor-doer in the theatre of life, and it exploits that analogy with surprising fulness. The analysis of such fulness shows how thoroughly the implications of the later reflections are pointedly suggested here, despite Macbeth's failure to see his words in the fulness of their potential. The "head to hand" idea implies a correspondence between the desire-action progression in living and the conception-composition progression in art. The "acted ere scann'd" idea relates to the role of the player rather than of the playwright. And it suggests the problem of the player who, in Lawlor's words, finds that "there is not time to con the part [because] it must be put into action at once."[23] The effect is very complex. It makes of Macbeth both author and actor, and it does so not in terms of any implicit evocation of the ideal _commedia dell' arte_ trouper skilled, because practised, in meeting the demands of _il teatro al improviso_, for the subsequent assertion, "We are but young in deed," obviates the possibility of such an implication. Rather, the lines seem associated with the norms of the conventional theatre and the speaker unwittingly appeals to the notion of a chaotic combination of inadequate scripting and inadequate playing. For example, the conceiver of "strange things" is an author, or playwright, who in the light of the theatre-life analogy is also a God or creator of a strange and inadequately contrived world, and an uncontrolled one at that. The creator is also his own creature, the author his own actor--an author, however, who makes impossible demands upon the actor, preventing a timely perusal of the script and, thus, forcing him to imitate that which has not been "scann'd" and, consequently, giving him nothing to signify. Hence, though the metaphor used by Macbeth may seem so hackneyed as not to warrant commentary, it does demand careful analysis, because it conveys not only an announcement of the programme of the future but conveys it in a manner that subtly indicates the frustrations that will become the history of Macbeth's latter days. The complexity of the metaphor reveals that what is absent from the programme of action is the concept of self-mastery. The parallel between the aesthetic problem and the ethical problem is clear enough: the "acted ere scann'd" intention eliminates the process of habitual thoughts and evaluations, eliminates the *nosce teipsum* problem earlier faced in "To know my deed, 'twere best not know myself" (II. ii. 72). The programme of action is extreme, is a rejection of the great humanistic ideal of temperance, an ideal which, as sixteenth-century commentary on Cicero's *De Officiis* makes quite clear, includes for Shakespeare's audience not only the need to control appetite, especially desire and lust, but also to use reason actively to support virtue and suppress the urgings of under-nature, so that intemperance is the equivalent of lack of self-knowledge.[24] Thus these lines, in the tension between the demands of self as playwright and the bewilderment of self as actor-without-script express only too aptly the chaos resulting from the denial of the humane self.

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[22] Sanders, Received Idea, p. 291 says that the words "wants hard use" indicate that Macbeth is in "pursuit of total insensibility."

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[23] John Lawlor, "Mind and Hand: Some Reflections on the Study of Shakespeare's Imagery," _Shakespeare Quarterly_, 8 (1957), p. 188.

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[24] See Soellner, *Shakespeare's Patterns of Self-Knowledge*, pp. 7-12 especially.

The ethical and epistemological import of the dismissal of Banquo's ghost as "horrible shadow" and "unreal mockery," that is, as nothing, can be best appreciated by an appeal not only to internal evidence provided in the play but also by reference to the traditional opposition between the reality of goodness and the unreality, the nothingness of evil. Following the disappearance of the ghost, Macbeth dedicates himself irrevocably to his own relativistic good. Both his victory over the reality of the ghost, the reality symbolized by Banquo, and his dedication of himself to relativism represent a powerfully ironic inversion of traditional wisdom and, appropriately, of the truths of his own imagination, for those truths and traditional wisdom and, appropriately, of the truths of his own imagination, for those truths and traditional wisdom are one, as has been demonstrated earlier.

The use of "shadows" and "mockery" is significant in the light of what is implied by Lady Macbeth's "this is the very painting of your fear" (l. 60) argument. I have already shown how her words represent a form of iconoclasm related to an utterly cynical view of the value of the icastic tension between the demands of self as playwright and the bewilderment of self as actor-without-script express only too aptly the chaos resulting from the denial of the humane self.

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> Tell him his fears are shallow, without instance;
> And for his dreams, I wonder he's so simple
> To trust the mock'ry of unquiet slumbers.
>
> (III. ii. 25-27)

But dreams, in Richard III, whether the dreamer be Stanley or Clarence or Catesby or Richard himself, just like the recurrent nightmares of Macbeth, belong to an order of revelation, of imaginative or intuitive truth, that makes them analogous in some mysterious way to the poet's discovery of the truths of the golden world in the furor or frenzy of inspiration. This analogy is wittily used by Shakespeare in A Midsummer Night's Dream, where Bottom encounters his essential asininity in a bottomless dream that is not only ineffable, but also "a more rare vision" (IV. i. 203). In this play, we are assured by Oberon that the lovers, who have, like Bottom, encountered in the mockery of the night the essential chaos of passion, will return to Athens, and then "all this derision/Shall seem a dream and fruitless vision" (III. ii. 370-371), all the "accidents" of the night shall appear "but as the fierce vexation of a dream" (IV. i. 67). But we know, as Hippolyta does, that the accidents of this ephemeral experience grow "to something of great constancy . . . strange and admirable" (V. i. 26-27); thus, the artist provides a subtle apologia for the truths he has imaginatively bodied forth, using the less controlled magician-artist king of the fairies as his foil. The word "shadow," too, has its associations with the world of the theatre and of art generally, and, again, _A Midsummer Night's Dream_ provides the ideal context for an understanding of these associations: Shakespeare gives to Puck an epilogue in which the audience is teased into the ambivalent response of recognizing the player's detaching himself from his role and of still experiencing an imaginative "hang-over" which prevents their totally divesting the actor of all association with Puck as threatening pooka:

> If we shadows have offended
> Think but this, and all is mended--
> That you have but slumb'red here
> While these visions did appear.
> And this weak and idle theme,
> No more yielding than a dream,
> Gentles do not reprehend.
> . . . .
> We will make amends ere long;
> Else the Puck a liar call.
>
> (V. i. 412-424)

The epilogue emphasizes in its pleasing irony the reality of the play as experience, as imaginative experience that will not yield totally to the everyday world of fact, to which the audience now returns by applauding the players as craftsmen. As Professor Mandel puts it, "by identifying the play (a product of Shakespeare's imagination) with dream (a product of any spectator's imagination), Shakespeare claims for the play in the real world the same kind of higher revelation that the audience finds in dream."[25] Lady Macbeth is to discover in dream the imaginative reality she so cursorily dismisses in Act III, Scene iv, the reality she aids Macbeth in dismissing as nothing by her rhetoric of iconoclasm.

How ironically subversive of traditional wisdom is Macbeth's denial of reality to all that Banquo and his ghost represent is evident when we recognize that in his irrevocable commitment to relativism he is rejecting the self associated with the metaphysical, with the higher order of Nature (that of his own--and Cordelia's--bonds!) in favour of the lower, the physical order of nature (which Banquo taught us to fear, and which Edmund, in Lear, champions, when, in his dismissal of the astrological he asserts a totally earth-bound concept of human reality). This irony can be understood by reference to Shakespeare's conventional use of the dialectic involving "nature" and "nothing," according to which, as Northrop Frye argues, the commitment to the lower order of nature inevitably deprives characters such as Edmund and Macbeth of any principle of order within themselves and leaves then in "nothingness, the abyss of annihilation and non-being."[26] The pattern of idea in Shakespearian drama outlined by Frye and many other critics[27] derives ultimately from a tradition of thought based principally on ideas articulated by writers such as St. Augustine and Boethius and absorbed by the syncretic spirit of Renaissance humanism.

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[25] Jerome Mandel, "Dream and Imagination in Shakespeare," Shakespeare Quarterly, 24 (1973), p. 67.

In De consolatione philosophiae, Boethius has his interlocutor Philosophy explain the relation between evil and nothing as follows: "'No man can doubt,' quoth she, 'but that God is almighty.' 'No man,' quoth I, 'that is well in his wits.' 'But,' quoth she, 'there is nothing that He who is almighty cannot do.' 'Nothing,' quoth I. 'Can God do evil?' 'No,' quoth I. 'Wherefore,' quoth she, 'evil is nothing, since He cannot do it who can do anything.'" (II [illegible] since He cannot do it who can do anything '" (italics mine).[28] Subsequently the discussion turns to an explanation of "the immense impotency of wicked men . . . [who] fail in the very sum and top of things" (p. 309) [because] "intemperance makes them frail, since they cannot strive against vice" (p. 311). Philosophy then continues the instruction with words which have a direct bearing on the problem of Macbeth:

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[26] "Nature and Nothing," in Essays on Shakespeare, ed. Gerald W. Chapman (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1965), pp. 44-45.

[27] Frye's assertions seem to be based on the work of scholars who have provided us with an awareness of ideas that now are commonplace critical lore. I refer to writings such as G. Wilson Knight's "Life Themes in Macbeth" in The Imperial Theme and "Great Creating Nature" in The Crown of Life; Theodore Spencer's Shakespeare and the Nature of Man; John F. Danby's Shakespeare's Doctrine of Nature; H.B. Parkes' "Nature's Diverse Laws: the Double Vision of the Elizabethans," Sewanee Review, 58 (1950), 402-18; L.C. Knights' "On the Background of Shakespeare's Use of Nature in Macbeth," Sewanee Review, 64 (1956), 207-17 as well as Some Shakespearian Themes, and R.C. Bald's "'Thou, Nature, art my goddess': Edmund and Renaissance Free Thought" in Joseph Quincy Adams Memorial Studies, ed. J.G. McManaway, et al (Washington: Folger Library, 1948).

> Or do [wicked men] wittingly and willingly forsake goodness, and decline to vices? But in this sort *they leave* not only to be powerful but *even to be at all. For they which leave the common end of all things which are, leave also being.* Which may perhaps seem strange to some that we should say that evil men are not at all, who are the greatest part of men: but yet it is so. For I deny not that evil men are evil, but withal I say that purely and simply *they are not.*
>
> (p. 311; emphasis mine)

In the light of this, Macbeth's turning to *his own good* rather than *the Good* is a turning away from the realm of being; his is a choice of a limited, mistaken reality over the reality of "the common end" of man and of all things, the reality of the ethical, visionary self. Accordingly, his commitment to the expedient good of desire is a betrayal of his eternal jewel to the common enemy of man.

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[28] Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, with the English translation of "I.T." (1609), revised by H.F. Stewart (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1918), III. xii, p. 291. Subsequent page references are to this text and are provided in parentheses at the end of quotations.

St. Augustine's view of reality and evil is similar to that of Boethius. Evil for him is the diminution, the privation, the absence of good, and good is a sine qua non of being, as he declares in the Enchiridion.[29] In the seventh book of the Confessions, he shows how he transcended the Manichean doctrine of substantial evil (discussed in Book IV, especially) and arrived at that view of the real which informs the work as a whole, the view according to which "all which is corrupted is deprived of good" and that should any corrupted thing "be deprived of all good" it "shall no longer be."[30] To arrive at this view he has long struggled towards making his own the concept of the a-materiality of God: he confesses that he had been constrained to conceive of the divinity "incorruptible, uninjurable and unchangeable . . . as being in space . . . because," he says, "whatsoever I conceived, deprived of this space, seemed to me nothing, yea altogether nothing" (VII. 2, p. 119). But this idea of nothing he immediately associates with gross-heartedness and lack of clearness (p. 119), and he later tells of arriving at insight into a contrary view of nothingness: "I inquired what iniquity was, and found it to be no substance, but the perversion of the will turned aside from Thee, O God" (VII, 22, p. 137). Augustine's view of temporal reality and thus of sense experience in the world of flux, is that the things of time are but masks for the transcendent ingredient in them,[31] and, for this reason, the "foul" who flee from the "fair" of God succeed only in moving always towards Him; and, stumbling upon Him, they stumble inevitably against His uprightness rather than the gentleness, which they have forsaken, and fall upon their own "ruggedness" (V, i, p. 73). Augustine speaks of the divine omnipresence as manifestation of a truth or knowledge, a Law or Logos, not discernible through sense experience, but discoverable in the inner life of the heart (IV, 18, p. 63). I take it that this suprasensory truth is discoverable through the operations of the imagination, ~~which~~ by which we can distinguish the visible from the intelligible world. If the will, denying the inner life of the heart, turns away from higher truth--and Augustine uses the imagery of light and darkness in the same way as

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[29] See Enchiridion, X-XII, ed. J.F. Shaw, in The Works of Aurelius Augustinus, Bishop of Hippo, Vol. IX (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1873), pp. 175-260.

[30] The Confessions of St. Augustine, trans. E.B. Pusey, D.D. (1907; London: J.M. Dent and Sons Ltd., 1957), VII, 18, p. 135. Subsequent quotations from the Confessions are from this edition; textual references are given in parentheses.

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[31] This is a recurrent theme in Augustinian philosophy. It informs Augustine's concept of the *rationes seminales*, the germs of original principles of things created. These rational seeds correspond to exemplars or ideas in the Divine mind. Augustine explains this concept in his *Literal Commentary on Genesis* (IX, 17, 32) and in *On the Trinity* (III. 8. 13) where he says that "in truth, some hidden seeds of all things that are born corporeally and visibly are concealed in the corporal elements of this world" and that created things get their distinctive forms therefrom as from "original rules." Bourke, pp. 102-103.

Shakespeare uses it in Macbeth[32]--this turning away is fundamentally a nothing, a diminution of being. The pertinence of such influential ideas to Macbeth's final decision-making in Act III, Scene iv is obvious. They help illuminate the irony of his denial of the reality of the ghost in two ways: first of all, in the context of "mine own good," the tantalizing presence of the ghost as symbol of that reality from which Macbeth alienates himself only to find it omnipresent (because essential to his being) is indeed nothing, in the orthodox Boethian-Augustinian sense, because it is contrary to, and a privation of, that chosen good; second, in terms of absolute good of ordered nature,[33] "mine own good" is contrary to being, a privation of the reality of goodness underlying "This supernatural soliciting . . . cannot be good" (I. iii. 130-31). "Mine own good" is antithetical, likewise, to all that is implied by the expression "good things of day" (III. ii. 52). "Mine own good" is part of anti-creation rather than creation and is, hence, no-thing. It is ironic, therefore, that Lady Macbeth's words "Nought's had" and Macbeth's "To be thus is nothing" unintentionally appeal to the Augustinian-Boethian doctrine of the nothingness or non-being of evil. And it is appropriate that when Macbeth has fully tested the consequences of his attachment to relativistic good and fully experienced life as non-being he should tell us of "a tale . . . signifying nothing."

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[32] See Confessions, XII, 10, p. 283: "O let the Light, the Truth, the Light of my heart, not mine own darkness, speak unto me. I fell off into that and became darkened . . . .I went astray, and remember Thee. I heard Thy voice behind me, calling me to return." Likewise the "delightfulness of contemplation, obtaining the Word of Life above" is said to "appear like lights in the world, cleaving to the firmament of . . . Scripture," where God instructs the believer "to divide between the things intellectual and the things of sense, as betwixt the day and the night" (XIII, 22, p.325). Light, here, is associated with the "brightness of wisdom," which in turn, is associated with the sun, "which gladdens the . . .day" (XIII, 23, p. 326).

[33] Augustine associates the natural man's ascension towards transcendent wisdom with the imagery of breast-feeding, as does Lady Macbeth when she voices her misgivings about Macbeth's lack of ruthlessness, and, in the same passage, he refers to "babe," "light" of day and "stars" (here symbols of human knowledge, as, to an important degree, they are for Macbeth in "Stars hide your fires") in a manner that underlines the importance of traditional ideas in this tragedy of awareness: "But the natural man, as it were, a babe in Christ, and

Though Erasmus, in the Enchiridion Militis Christiani, another influential, frequently-translated work in the sixteenth century, does not prove as unambiguous as Augustine or Boethius on the nothingness of evil (the idea of the enchiridion as a dagger forged to combat evil[34] implies a possibly Manichean approach to the problem), yet he treats the idea of the soul ensnared in vice in a manner that casts interesting light on Macbeth's tragedy. For Erasmus, man's

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fed on milk, until he be strengthened for solid meat and his eye be enabled to behold the Sun, let him not dwell in night, but be content with the light of the moon and the stars" (XIII, 23, pp. 326-27) [Emphasis mine].

[34] See The Handbook of the Militant Christian, I, 2, in Dolan, The Essential Erasmus, p. 39, where the need for a "manual of arms" to enable the Christian to "withstand the enemy's tumultuous assaults" implies a concept of vice as reality rather than delusive unreality.

alienating himself from transcendent truth is a death of the spirit, a descent into nothingness: "When the eyes of the heart are so obscured that you cannot perceive the brightest light (that is, truth), when you are no longer aware with your inner ears of the divine voice, do you think your soul is really alive? . . .Why at this point does your soul feel absolutely nothing? It must certainly be because it is dead. Why dead? Because God, its very life, is not present."[35] This death of the soul as defined by Erasmus might be seen as analogue to Macbeth's state of non-being as it is manifest in his reflective moments in Act V, especially in the psychic paralysis of his response to the shrieks of women which are the "dismal treatise" announcing the moment of Lady Macbeth's death. Macbeth's senses cannot be "started," his soul cannot recoil from "direness" (V. v. 9-15). Indeed, "I 'gin to be aweary of the sun,/And wish th' estate of the world were now undone" (V. v. 49-50) is a confession of his immersion in the Augustinian "night" of the senses and of his awareness of the hollowness, the emptiness, he has made his all. It is an acknowledgement that the world of his choosing bears the same relation to reality as "th' equivocation of the fiend" bears to "truth" (V. v. 43-44), and a wish that creation itself share his own state of nothingness. The poignancy of this arises from the protagonist's having turned away from the light of nature and his having refused the nourishment provided by the milk of human kindness: the laws of nature--Erasmus' "eyes of the heart"--were, we know, imaginatively and rationally apprehended by him before his fatal decision-making and were a sufficient guide[36] to perserverence in virtue, which is the life of the soul. The dark world of "seeling Night" is unnatural, and the experience of the soul committed to self-realization. Therein is the experience of nothing. The contrary mode of life, the striving for self-fulfilment in terms of reverence for nature's bonds and respect for royalty of nature, is the contrary of this nothing, the reality reflected in the ghost as emblem of the self-fulfilling real and as shadow of possibilities of Being in comparison with which the tyrant's existence is Nought.

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[35] _Enchiridion_, I. i, Dolan, p. 32.

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[36] According to Hooker, Natural Law, which reason is capable of discerning (as Macbeth rationally discerns it in "I dare do all that may become a man;/Who dares do more is none"), is in the absence of divine revelations a sufficient guide to right conduct (Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity, I, viii, 9). For an important discussion of Hooker's views on Natural Law and on his indebtedness to Scholasticism, see Curry, Shakespeare's Philosophical Patterns, pp. 15-19.

CHAPTER V

"The Restoration of the Word"

The first half of *Macbeth* , the part of the play which dramatizes Macbeth's encounter with dualism in its ontological, ethical and linguistic ramifications, reaches a climactic conclusion in Act III, Scene iv, when the protagonist commits himself to that which he sees as his own good and all it implies as a solution to the problems of knowledge and language which are the basis of his insecurity. Act III, Scene v provides an introduction to the second half of the play, the part which dramatizes the futility of the hero's determined escape into perverse world-view, inverted values and univocal language as his realm of self-sufficiency. The signal of the new beginning is provided in the sense of "parallel opening"[1] afforded by the reappearance of the Witches, whom we have not seen since the temptation scene and who resume their role as providers of the suggestions which Macbeth is to interpret and act upon.

The first part of the play has the following structure: Act I, Scenes i-iii serves as prologue[2] to the tragedy, introducing us to the Witches (I. i.) and to the royal party (I. ii.) as perspectives from which to discover the significance of the "good-ill" suggestions of Act I, Scene iii. Thereafter begins the rising action, which leads to the climax of the banquet-scene. It consists of three phases: the preliminaries to the murder of Duncan (I. iv. - I. vii.), which highlight the ambivalence of Macbeth's awareness of what the crime involves; the experiences directly associated with the killing of the king (II. i. - II. iv.), which reveal Macbeth's ambivalent response to the discovery of the validity of the premonitory wisdom overcome in the temptation scene, and then the scenes that have to do with the business of Banquo's death (iii. i. - III. iv.), in which Macbeth vainly tries to confine his awareness and life's significance to the limits of the only world-view that could make acceptable the original commitment to regicide. This movement of the play builds up to the vain success of Macbeth in championing his own good. The final movement of the play demonstrates that success to be failure, restores the language that defines it as non-success, and shows Macbeth's world, his chosen reality, to be nothing.

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[1] The phrase is Emrys Jones's; see *Scenic Form in Shakespeare*, p. 196.

[2] See E. B. Lyle, "Act-Division in *Macbeth*," *Notes and*

Queries, n.s. 20 (1973), 140-41. Lyle suggests that I. i-iii and III. v. - IV. i. are "prologues" respectively to the "Duncan" (I. iv. - II. iv.) and "Banquo" (III. i. - iv.) sections and to the "Macduff's family" movement (IV. ii. - V. vii.). I find this persuasive, though nothing is made of the fact that Act II deals more with Banquo and Macduff as voices defining "murther" rather than with Duncan as sleeper and corpse. I cannot accept I. iv. - II. iv. as a single act as suggested in Lyle's new five-act structure.

This final movement is structured so as to mirror in an ironic manner the structure of the earlier movement. Act III, Scenes v and vi, along with Act IV, Scene i, constitute a prologue to the falling action which reaches its climax in Act V, Scene viii with the destruction of the tragic hero. This movement also is divided into three phases.

The first phase involves the murder of Lady Macduff (Act IV, Scene ii), the scene at Edward's court (Act IV, Scene iii) and Lady Macbeth's sleep-walking (Act I, Scene i). These scenes in turn dramatize on the levels of action, rational analysis and intuitive discovery of truth the nature of the confusion that is the "order" of the chaotic Macbeth universe. Here there is a reversal of Macbeth's earlier progress towards crime, in that the deed itself precedes the analysis of its significance, that ratiocination precedes the intuitive encounter with truth, and, that, in accord with Macbeth's twice-voiced commitment to releasing impulse into achievement without the hindrance of reflection,[3] the action takes place solely in the arena of what was hitherto the secondary (outer) action of the drama, and is in no way made to reflect Macbeth's consciousness. This is a striking contrast to the dramatic mode of the first phase of the rising action, because, there, the utterances of characters such as Duncan, Banquo and Lady Macbeth were inevitably to be viewed in the perspective of Macbeth's own reflections in the first great soliloquy. Now the protagonist's absence from the stage and the absence of any connection of dramatic incident and utterance with his awareness are meaningfully paralleled as an extension of his alienation from the conscience that makes cowards.

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[3] "Strange things I have in head that will to hand./ Which must be acted, ere they may be scann'd" (III. iv. 138-139) and "From this moment,/The very firstlings of my heart shall be/The firstlings of my hand" (IV. i. 146-148).

The second phase of the final movement begins with the appearance of Malcolm, Siward and their armies as forces of retribution in Act V, Scene ii and concludes in Scene vii when the exit of the wryly confident Macbeth, following Young Siward's death, precedes by a matter of moments both the entrance of fate's agent Macduff and Old Siward's announcement of the taking of Dunsinane. The dramatic principle informing this movement is that of counterpoint. We witness in turn the relentless onward movement of the powers of good and the relentless undermining of the weakly based confidence that sustains Macbeth. The significance of the juxtaposition of scenes is reinforced by thematic and imagistic parallels in the paired scenes and by the implicit suggestions that their actions are simultaneous. For instance, Menteth's announcement that "the English power is near" (V. ii. 1.) would seem to coincide in time with Macbeth's "Bring me no more reports" (V. iii. 1), because the reporters on each side proclaim the same tidings. Similarly, Malcolm's order, "Let every soldier hew him down a bough" (V. iv. 4) parallels, and may well be taken to be contemporaneous with, Macbeth's command, "hang out our banners on the outward walls (V. v. 1). Thereafter there is a shift from contemporaneity to sequence, but the sequence suggests the quasi-contemporaneous and seems designed to underline the irony of Macbeth's reliance on the Witches' recent prophecies immediately before his nemesis, Macduff, replaces him on the stage during the fall of Dunsinane; Malcolm's ordering his troops to throw down their leafy screens (V. vi. 1) might be the basis for Macbeth's realization that "they have tied [him] to a stake" (V. vii. 1) and for his need to discover the beguiling security afforded by the victory over his youthful opponent.

The alternation of scene with scene in this phase of the dramatic action develops with a see-saw rhythm of coincidence that reaches its ironic climax in the simultaneity of the minor victory over the boy soldier and the major defeat in the loss of the tyrant's stronghold. There is something designedly equivocal about a confident assertion, and apparent vindication of the protagonist's manliness at the very moment when the stronghold of Dunsinane, the symbol of his physical universe, fails to withstand the assault of the forces of righteousness. The over-all effect of such structuring is a dramatic reflection of the contest between Macbeth's adherence to the knowledge associated with the Witches' truth and his growing realization of the worthlessness of that knowledge. He has, as his last resort against the supremacy of the truth vested in Banquo, sought the prognostications of the Weird Sisters, who he claims now not only have "more in them than mortal knowledge" (I. v. 3) but "know/All mortal consequence" (V. iii. 4-5), and his quest is for that security in the world of his adoption which dreams, fears, voices in the night and the ghost of Banquo as chief among the "rebellious dead" (IV. i. 97) have denied him.

The scenes featuring Macbeth's antagonists show us men secure in rightness of cause, aware of the sanctions of loyalty and justice which make morally virtuous their martial prowess. They embody the wholeness and wholesomeness of Macbeth's rejected self, that is, of his valiant way of life so highly praised in the second scene of the play. The scenes featuring Macbeth, on the other hand, display a hero whose martial prowess is undiminished (and this is recognized by his opponents, who deem it to be either madness or valiant fury [V. iii. 13-14]), but it is a prowess that reveals itself as mere soldierly irascibility allied to a deep sense of loss and to a perverse kind of security which, he is to discover, is nought but the "equivocation of the fiend,/That lies like truth" (V. v. 43-44).

This movement of the play mirrors inversely the corresponding phase of the rising action, the four scenes of

Act II. That part of the play dramatized Macbeth's imaginative encounter with the knowledge of his deed and reached its climax in his capacity to hide that knowledge and to draw upon his Machiavellian reserves of self-conscious hypocrisy in order to outface his fellows with both protestations of grief and practical suggestions about putting on manly readiness. In this later phase of the unfolding drama, Macbeth is singularly free of imaginative encounters with the significance of things. He is not plagued by the restless ecstasy of the fear which haunted him up to the turning point of the play, the fear which was indistinguishable from the promptings and accusations of moral awareness within him. He is not lost poorly in his thoughts. Instead, he is given to discursive utterances about the incoherence of his existence. He speaks of the withering of his way of life, the incapacity of medical art to cure the diseases of the mind, the insensitivity which habit provides to those familiar with direness, the sickness of the land. He does so, concentrating on these things as phenomena, but incapable of discovering their underlying significance. As cynical philosopher rather than visionary poet, he experiences a form of anagnorisis that is phenomenal rather than metaphysical. But he is denied the honesty of the true cynic, because his perspective is subjective: committed to self-realization in a purely phenomenal world, he is prepared to defend his false Idols of the Cave, "though the treasure/Of Nature's germens tumble all together, /Even till destruction sicken" (IV. i. 58-60), and will continue to defend them even when he begins "to be aweary of the sun" and wishes "th' estate o' th' world . . . undone" (V. v. 49-50). His perspective is one of philosophical confusion: the intellectual honesty of his vision of life's incoherence coexists with his fallacious faith in the recent prophecies provided by the Witches. He accepts these predictions as an assurance that fate has answered his challenge (III. i. 70-71) by joining with him in the lists, thereby releasing him from fear as well as sleeplessness (IV. i. 84-85).

This confusion is the extreme expression of a tendency towards naïveté revealed in Macbeth at the moment of his first encounter with the dualistic. The contrast between Banquo's intellectual detachment from the prophetic greetings and Macbeth's rapt enthrallment therewith, and the contrast between the precise distinctions in "so foul and fair a day" and the blurring of those distinctions in "cannot be ill; cannot be good" revealed that, in the moral battle between the vicious and virtuous promptings of his nature, the potential for the victory of the former was considerable--for even the prosodic placing of "cannot be ill" suggests an implicit usurpation of the initial emphasis upon what moral sense defines as "foul." Now, that tendency has become a reality, as if Macbeth has been convinced by the rhetoric of his wilful protestation "For mine own good,/All causes shall give way." The initial potential for confusion, a confusion that, as the insights of Macbeth in the soliloquies of Act I reveal, can only be realized by an act of will, has now become an actuality. It is a confusion whose banality is revealed in the contrast between his desperately honest taunting of the corpse of the young man, Siward, and his desperately hypocritical protestations following the discovery of the corpse of the old man, Duncan. It is a confusion implicit in the "I am a man again" buttressing of the manly self when the disappearance of Banquo's ghost is taken as a sign of its non-reality.

The third phase of the falling action, that which corresponds to the Banquo scenes in the first half of the play, is brief and uncomplicated. It is comprised of Act V, Scene viii, in which Macduff, the chosen successor to Banquo as emblem of the truths of the Duncan world, finally reduces Macbeth and his world to nothing. Here Macduff's voice attests to all that was represented by Banquo's ghost and Duncan's kingship--that is, the reality rejected by Macbeth--and, as echo of Macbeth's better self, Macduff defeats the equivocator on the level of language before discomfiting the tyrant on the level of soldiership. Tongue and sword unite in a final Nay to all that Macbeth represents and, this time, there is no "I am a man again" ruse to deny the truth encountered. Macbeth's world of the physical shrinks and all that is left for him to defend is his mere body, before which he throws the shield of soldierly daring (V. viii. 32-33), the last uncompromised "fact" of his finite world. Then even that fact is destroyed.

What remains, Act V, Scene ix, is the play's epilogue, a scene that celebrates the restoration of Scotland, the restoration of virtue, and the restoration of truth and of time's order. It is an epilogue whose implicit ironies have been ignored because critics have failed to see how limited is the point of view of those who are given the play's last _sententiae_ and how far they are from being aware of the universal implications of that "history" which we see as tragedy.[4] The significance of the ambivalence of this final scene will be discussed at the end of this chapter.

The sense of the function of Act III, Scenes v-vi and Act IV, Scene i as new beginning, or as prologue to the second grand movement of the play, is suggested not only by the reappearance of the Witches in Act III, Scene v and the provision of a choric commentary in Act III, Scene vi as prelude to Macbeth's meeting with the prophetic hags in Act IV, Scene i--all of which mirrors the shape of the introductory prologue, Act I, Scenes i-iii--but also by the resumption of the principal theme of that earlier portion of the drama, the theme of the relation between word and truth.

The opening movement of the play established the assumption of Duncan and his society that the ideal relationship between words and truth is mirrored in the everyday world, and showed Macbeth's sharing that assumption as he pondered the Witches' prophecies. It also established that the order of the Duncan world is safe only insofar as the defenders of that world share Banquo's prudent recognition of incompatible truths and have the integrity to defend the ontological norm in both speech and action. It established Macbeth's tragic potential to deviate from the norm, showed him committing himself to ethic and language of expediency and thus reducing the order of the Duncan world to chaos. The climax of the play showed Macbeth reaffirming his commitment to his choice and its chaotic consequences: as he sees it, returning were tedious, so he must proceed to the limit of what his decision entailed not only in ethical and epistemological terms but in ontological and linguistic terms as well. It is clear that if the harmony of the world Macbeth has destroyed is to be restored it can be restored only by the ability of the defenders of that world to recognize the nature of the threat to the word-truth relationship embodied in Macbeth and defined for us by Banquo in the temptation scene and their ability, following upon that recognition, to restore and defend the betrayed norm. How such a restoration is possible is shown especially in the second phase of the falling action, most precisely of all in the scene at Edward's court, where Malcolm demonstrates his possession of the intellectual acuity characteristic of Banquo at his first appearance, and where Macduff represents the integrity of the essential commitment to words as mirrors of knowledge.

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[4] This distinction is also made my Maynard Mack, _Killing the King_, p. 184.

The confusion of Macbeth in his willed blindness to the complexities of language involves him in an ironic reversal in the prologue to the falling action. He who, in his adoption of the whole range of deceptive looks, words and deeds, embodied the deviation from the absolutistic norm of the Duncan world, now seeks in words and shows the truths which he is prepared to face as the "worst" (III. iv. 134) and which, to his surprise, he discovers to be "sweet bodements! good" (IV. i. 96). But the integrity of his resolve "to know,/By the worst means, the worst" is, though he seems incapable of recognizing it, quite ambiguous: the subsequent vow, "for mine own good,/All causes shall give way," is a statement that represents a reduction to the univocal of an earlier complex idea that his own good "cannot be good" even while it seems that it "cannot be ill" either. The equivocator, to defend the integrity of his choice can no longer swear in both the scales against either scale: committed to the reality of the physical, the ethic of the expedient and the language of Will, he is committed to a single truth and, ironically, he, the destroyer of the ideal word-truth relationship, tries to restore that relationship in order to defend the Macbeth chaos, not to restore the Duncan order.

Appropriately, now that the action of the play is, as it were, doubling back upon itself, providing reverse images of earlier developments, the two scenes preceding Macbeth's encounter with the Witches (III. v. and vi) dramatize the threat to the Macbeth anti-world in the same way that the scenes preceding his first encounter with the prophetic hags dramatized the threat to the Duncan world. Act I, Scene i introduced us to ambiguity, to inverted values, to the problem of paradox, to the evil and complexity for which the speakers of the following scene, and later Macbeth, were so unprepared. Act III, Scene v shows us the Witches in the company of a loquacious Hecate, whose language, unlike that of the opening scene, is totally free of paradox[5] and is indeed, by contrast, simplistically expository, preparing Witches and audience alike for the devices that will turn the protagonist's quest for knowledge (he "will come to _know_ his destiny" [l. 17]) into confusion (the "security" that will raise "his hopes 'bove wisdom, grace, and fear" [ll. 25-33]).[6] By contrast, the conversation between Lenox and an unnamed Lord in the following scene, is charged with irony, an irony arising from an awareness of the nature of deceit, and awareness of the quality of Macbeth's evil and the technique that made it possible. This irony is a form of reverse equivocation, for, as the first words of Lenox reveal, he has learned by necessity to use words in order to veil truth, but has done so in a manner that protects rather than assaults veracity:

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[5] Burrell, "Macbeth: A Study of Paradox," _Shakespeare Jahrbuch_, 90 (1954), p. 180.

[6] I refrain from entering into the controversy about the spuriousness of this scene or about the theories that it is misplaced in F_1 (see New Arden introduction, pp. xxxiii-xxxvi) because the scene is not only functional in terms of the requirements of the plot, as Walker suggests in _The Time is Free_ (p. 127), but also accords with the principles of design in both "prologues," especially in the way in which that design draws attention to the development of Macbeth's relationship with the problem of linguistic ambivalence.

> My former speeches have but hit your thoughts,
> Which can interpret further: only, I say,
> Things have been strangely borne.
>
> (III. vi. 1-3)

This is a Lenox who once epitomized the expectations that the gap between appearance and truth was non-existent and that words would accord with appearance as predictably as appearance with truth:

> What a haste looks his eyes! So should he look
> That seems to speak things strange.
>
> (I. ii. 47-48)

The words "strangely" and "strange," each in its context, relate to the perfidy of a Thane of Cawdor, but the expression "Things have been strangely borne"[7] is a signal of the gleaning of wisdom from the harvest of Macbeth's pretenses. Thereafter, Lenox can use words such as "monstrous" (l. 8), "fact" (l. 10), " nobly" and "wisely" (l. 14) to echo the vocabulary of the tyrant, but, in echoing it, to mock its hollowness and reflect an antithetical terminology which the educated thoughts of his hearer can decipher. Having done so, he closes in the consequence with his interlocutor, and demands an unequivocal, unironic account of events. The Lord's report, now that Lenox has defined himself as the aware and prudent defender of truth, can restore language to its simple and ideal function; his story is provided in words that bear a one-to-one relationship with truth, referring to "pious Edward," "holy King" (ll. 27, 30) and to Macbeth's accurs'd hand (l. 49) and accurately reflecting the ability of the one king's grace and the other's gracelessness.

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[7] "Borne" may be ambiguous. Its primary meaning seems to be "carried on," as the New Arden editor suggests. But it may also suggest "child-bearing" here as elsewhere in Shakespeare: see Tempest, I. ii. 120, Hamlet, III. i. 124, and Henry VI, I. i. 217. If so, "Strangely borne" is a restatement of Lenox's earlier remark about "confus'd events,/ New hatch'd to th' woeful time" (II. iii. 59-60; emphasis mine). In the light of this there is poetic justice in the news of Macduff's strange birth as punishment for Macbeth's decision to bring forth horror.

Furthermore, the restoration of the wholeness of language is paralleled by the restoration of the wholeness of soldiership, and this is a reversal of Macbeth's tragic decision-making that is of central importance to the play's later development. The import of this Lord's revelation is that Macduff's mission in England is the restoration to soldiership of the sanctions that make it virtuous: the irascible and the destructive allied to just cause--and, significantly, independent of the vicious buffets of _fortuna meretrix_ --will restore the wholeness disunified by the destroyer of life's feast. We learn that

> [Malcolm]is receiv'd
> Of the most pious Edward with such grace,
> That the malevolence of fortune nothing
> Takes from his high respect
>
> (ll. 26-29)

and that Macduff's purpose is "to pray the holy King" to "wake" Northumberland and Siward so that they may join in a warlike enterprise, ratified by God (ll. 32-33), that will enable Duncan's subjects to

> Give to [their] tables meat, sleep to [their] nights,
> Free from [their] feasts and banquets bloody knives,
> Do faithful homage, and receive free honours.
>
> (ll. 34-36)

The contrast between the purpose underlying the Lord's simple truth-telling in Act III, Scene vi and Hecate's in Act III, Scene v, though both of them speak of the confounding of Macbeth, is as important as the contrast between Lenox's ironies and the ironic prophecies of the succeeding scene. The rhetoric of irony and the rhetoric of direct assertion are used by the forces of righteousness for the protection of truth and the restoration of order, as will again be evident in Act IV, Scene iii, while the irony and simplicity of the contrary forces (III. v. and IV. i.) have as the life of their design the triumph of evil. All language then is ambiguous, but the solution to the problem of ambiguity lies in the exercise of will. The direction of the will informing the choice of words in discourse--and this is true also of the direction of the will informing the exercise of martial virtue--determines what can be defined as good or ill. But, of course, "good" and "ill" are then potentially ambiguous, depending on the ethical grounds of the speaker: the absolutistic "good," ratified by God, is antithetical to the relativistic "good," ratified only by individual desire. For example, Hecate deems Macbeth evil because he "loves for his own ends" rather than those of the Witches (III. v. 13), thus choosing the wrong priorities of individual desire; whereas, for Lenox, Macbeth's evil is associated with his having "borne all things well" (III. vi. 17) for the ends of private expediency rather than for ends sanctioned by Heaven (l. 19) and Nature (ll. 34-36).

Macbeth's incapacity to meet the threat to the adequacy of his way of life and the assumptions that support it is established in a number of ways in the prologue to the falling action. First of all, the verbal relationship between the Witches' incantations and his own earlier thoughts suggests that their language, their knowledge and their evil are similar in kind to his own and that the knowledge he seeks will be merely a reinforcement of his own knowledge rather than the extension or modification of it. Secondly, the hero's lack of the intellectual prudence necessary for the discovery of truth is revealed in the contrast between Macbeth's naive theory of language implied in his orders to the Witches and Lenox's sophisticated awareness of the paradoxical function of words as distorters and yet purveyors of knowledge. Thirdly, Macbeth is betrayed by a fallacy: he commands the Witches to look into the seeds of time and discover the order of the future but couches that command in words that not only threaten the existence of the seeds of time but of "Nature's germens" (IV. i. 59) too. To threaten the utter destruction of what medieval metaphysics labelled the rationes seminales (logoi spermatikoi), the "seeds of matter" which are the essence of nature's generative powers,[8] is an outrage against the very order he wishes revealed, an outrage as illogical as the decision by one who, subsequent to his determination to cancel Nature's bonds, demands a bond of Fate. Macbeth's actions in this part of the play, especially his totally univocal interpretation of the utterances of the Apparitions, show the extent to which his very life has become "confusion's masterpiece."

The sense of vicious circle that leads the audience to expect a confirmation of the heroic will rather than a discovery of truth in his meeting with the Witches is effected at the beginning of Act IV, Scene i by the way in which the sorcerers' incantations persistently echo Macbeth's earlier utterances in the play, and more especially by the fact that the Witches echo in literal terms his metaphors, thus parodying his reduction of truth to the dimensions of physical reality. To "th' ingredience of [their] cauldron" (l. 34) they add "poison'd entrails" (l. 5); their action has in it an echo of Macbeth's statement that "even-handed Justice/ Commends th'ingredience of our poison'd chalice/To our own lips" (I. vii. 10-12). But the echo is imperfect, and meaningfully so. The moral vision of the soliloquy is not reflected; it is totally ignored. Metaphysical truth is superseded by palpable fact. Yet this mirroring of Macbeth's reduction of truth to fact also reveals the inadequacy of such reduction, because these palpable ingredients will produce a charm that transcends the limitations of the physical. The sense of vicious circle is intensified and so is the dramatization of the hero's fallacy. The decline of Macbeth's awareness of the hidden significance in the material world is shown to co-exist with the potential in that world to release on a visionary level the significance denied by willed metaphysical blindness. Hence, with the confirmation of the heroic will there co-exists the inevitability of the confirmation of the knowledge rejected by that will.

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[8] See Curry, Philosophical Patterns, pp. 30 ff.

The same is true of the dramatic effect of the other aspects of the incantatory catalogue. The physical paraphernalia used by the Witches reflects the imagery that is so important in the primary action of the first half of the play. The successful elimination of all moral echoes suggests to the audience the importance of the moral considerations here ignored. This is tantamount to a reassurance that the moral dimensions of things will be reasserted as surely as the symbolic meaning of Banquo was earlier reasserted at the banquet-table. Macbeth's reaction to the rediscovery cannot be fully anticipated, but whether he will bemoan the loss of that world he has destroyed or define the emptiness of the world he has created, we can at least expect a statement of the significance of life that will comment on the absence of what the Witches' brew ingredients indirectly recall. "Wool of bat" (l. 15), "howlet's wing" (l. 17) and "slips of yew/Sliver'd in the moon's eclipse" (ll. 27-28) recall the bat's "cloister'd flight" (III. ii. 40-41) associated with the death of Banquo, the screaming and shrieking owl (II. ii. 3, 15) of the night of Duncan's death, the invocation to "seeling Night" (III. ii. 46), as well as Banquo's comments, at the beginning of Act II, on the absence of moonlight. Similarly, the numerous references to mouth and entrails, all of them associated with destructive animality, should remind the audience of Macbeth's struggle with ethical problems: "tongue of dog" (l. 15), "tooth of wolf" (l. 21), "adder's fork" and "blindworm's sting" (l. 16) have distant echoes of Macbeth's lecture to the Murderers on the valu'd file of men-dogs (III. i. 94), and of his reference to Fleance as adder, or worm, venomous but with "no teeth for th' present" (III. iv. 30). Likewise, Macbeth's declaration that the "maws of kites" are the only secure "monuments" for his victims (III. iv. 71-72) is mirrored in "tiger's chaudron" (l. 33) and "maw and gulf/Of the ravin'd salt-sea shark" (l. 24). Furthermore, the Witches add "hemlock" (l. 25), venomous toad (l. 8), fenny snake (l. 12) as well as adder and blindworm (l. 16) to make their non-nourishing "gruel"[9] into a "charm . . . firm and good" (l. 38). This serves as a kind of physical parody of Macbeth's interpreting the good in Banquo and his issue as something serpent-like and poisonous (III. iv. 28-30) and it should remind us too of Lady Macbeth's advice about the need to play the snake beneath the flower if inclination is to actualize itself as accomplishment (I. v. 64-65). Likewise, the Witches' catalogue includes references to "birth-strangl'd babe" (l. 30) and sow-eaten farrow (ll. 64-65) as physical reminders of Lady Macbeth's doctrine of heroic commitment in the murdered babe protestation (I. vii. 54 ff.) and in Macbeth's "bring forth men-children" acceptance of that doctrine and implicit blessing upon such theoretical slaughter. Even the Witches' adding to the "flame" of the odoriferous "grease that's sweaten/From the murder's gibbet" (ll. 65-66) has its mirror function: it can be associated, metaphorically at least, with the hero's remarks on his restless ecstasy as well as with the porter's gibe at the farmer (analogously

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[9] Knight sees IV. i. as inversion of III. iv. in that whereas the earlier "unreal mockery" interrupted a life-giving banquet, now a hell-broth gruel is part of a "death-banquet" producing "not bodily sustenance but more phantoms" (Imperial Theme, p. 139).

Macbeth) who hanged himself rather than harvest the foison of Nature's gifts and who should now "have napkins enow about [him] . . . for here [he'll] sweat for't" (II. iii. 4-7).

The Witches' literal parody of Macbeth's earlier imagery suggests, therefore, that Macbeth's good and theirs are identical, but that echoes of a contrary good are ultimately inescapable. What this means is that, for the present, Macbeth's successful escape from those echoes makes him not only inhumane but, in the Witches' manner, inhuman. That escape is suggested by the way in which he, in turn, verbally reflects or parodies uncomically those ingredients of the magic brew that are associated with the ravinous and destructive: "Answer me . . . though the yesty waves/ Confound and swallow navigation up" (ll. 53-54). The sense of vicious circle is reinforced by this double echo; and its function is, evidently, to demonstrate how Macbeth is trapped in a linguistic Vulcan's net, incapable of recognizing the fallacy of his desire that the word-truth decorum appropriate to the Duncan world of ideals should maintain its coherence despite his own attack on all the truths and conventions essential to it. The second half of Act IV, Scene i, which presents Macbeth's response to the shows of knowledge demanded by him, powerfully bears out this idea of entrapment.

The First Apparition, an armed head, appears to the accompaniment of thunder. The head reflects the military insurrection of Macdonwald and Cawdor and anticipatorily mirrors Macbeth's own severed head at the end of the play--a function which invests "He knows thy thought . . . say thou nought" (ll. 69-70) with retrospective irony, for the words spoken, "beware Macduff" (l. 71) do no more than "harp [Macbeth's] fear aright" (l. 74), just as the first greeting of the Witches in the temptation scene, "Hail to thee, Thane of Glamis" does no more than confirm his normal awareness.

The Second Apparition, a bloody child, again accompanied by thunder--which echoes the choric account of troubled nature in the scene featuring Rosse and the Old Man (II. iv)--raises hope, just as "Hail to thee, Thane of Cawdor" did originally. What the apparition signifies is not questioned by the hero, though we may see it as an ambiguous image, at once the "naked newborn babe" of Macbeth's imagination, the image of Macduff "untimely ripped" from his mother's womb, and the symbol of infanticide, theoretical and real, thus an image of the protagonist's abortive interference in the slow growth of time. But the questor after knowledge again fails to ask the right questions, to see the multiplex possibilities of truth, and again commits himself to the elimination of contemplation, promising to "make assurance double sure,/And take a bond of Fate" (ll. 83-84) by releasing into deed his impulse to kill Macduff, without allowing any interim to weigh the wisdom of the attempt. Here he reveals that the "security" he seeks is the security of words that can give the lie to fear (l. 85), that is, the validation of the language that defines ethical awareness as cowardice and the stopping up of the aural access to the truths of outraged Nature ineffably voiced in the thunder of the troubled heavens. Accordingly, the search for the validation of the expedient self is allied with linguistic obtuseness, as shown in his interpretation of the statement

> Be bloody, bold, and resolute: laugh to scorn
> The power of man, for none of woman born
> Shall harm Macbeth.
>
> (ll. 79-81)

"Be bloody, bold, and resolute" has all the assurances of "Hail to thee, Thane of Glamis"; what follows should be as disconcerting as "Hail, Macbeth! that shalt be King." But the response to both orders is identical. There is no reflection on the ambiguity of the phrase "the power of man," no awareness that martial manliness and the manliness of ethical probity may either or both be in question. And the reaction to "none of woman born" is critical because Macbeth's ultimate discomfiture will depend on his learning the ambiguity of "born". The contrast of his reflection on these lines with the probing of the "cannot be ill: cannot be good" analysis of the earlier prophecies is a measure of the madness that is essential to his integrity of will.

The Third Apparition, _a child crowned with a tree_ in his hand, should suggest, to one who professes to seek to know the worst, some remembrance of "for Banquo's issue have I fil'd my mind" (III. i. 64), should suggest to him the Prince of Cumberland, Duncan's issue, whose claim to the throne was a step temporarily o'erleapt (I. v. 48), and should suggest time's ordered growth and the future of Duncan's planting that might have been his (I. iv. 28-29); thus, it should be acknowledged by him as a disconcerting image of what is yet within the seeds of time. But it is not. Nor is there any recognition of the incongruity of the image of fair innocence and the words of foulness that seem fair to Macbeth. The eye of the imagination has been seeled by Night. The ear alone responds, and it is the univocal interpretation of the words spoken, an interpretation answering the necessities of will, and not answering the suggestions of a more complex truth, that reveals Macbeth as victim of his own equivocal decision-making:

> Be lion-mettled, proud, and take no care
> Who chafes, who frets, or where conspirers are:
> Macbeth shall never vanquish'd be, until
> Great Birnam Wood to high Dunsinane hill
> Shall come against him.
> (ll. 90-94)

These words ostensibly validate Macbeth's way of life, though they partake of an excessiveness that should be, but is not, qualified. "Be lion-mettled" affirms the self-sufficiency of that valour earlier associated with eagle and lion (I. ii.

35). But "take no care" suggests that Machiavellianism--looking like the innocent flower, keeping fee'd servants in his subject's homes, taking bonds of Fate--is supererogatory until the unthinkable becomes actual. The deceit of this horrid reassurance lies in the fiendish equivocation of words such as "until" and "come" and in the ambiguous nature of reality: Macbeth's linguistic rashness, his limited understanding of truth, his too-narrow view of nature--all of which decorously parallel his tyrannical impulsiveness, encourage him to interpret these words univocally as he did "born" a moment before; "until" is really crucial, because it has connotations of future actuality, whereas Macbeth interprets it as "unless," recognizing only connotations of extreme improbability: "That will never be," (l. 94). "Come" he interprets in terms of voluntary motion, and the idea of passive portage is not entertained. "Born" he interprets in the most physically limited and scientifically precise manner which fails to allow for Caesarian section as a form of birth; thus he ignores the potential in "born" generally to denote entry into life. All his univocal interpretations, just like his faith in the ideal word-truth relationship, ironically depend upon an unquestioned faith in the order of Nature which he has rashly betrayed in committing himself to the diminished Edmundian "nature" whose "order" is mere chaos.

This rashness, supported by the security that is self-delusion, then leads him to demand that those who know all mortal consequences belie their earlier promise of royal dynasty to Banquo's issue. It is this rashness that leads to the final apparition. This is a vision unaccompanied by words and so appealing unequivocally to the eye of the understanding, and preventing the reassurance discoverable in language that is only half heard. This vision "starts" and "sears" his eye-balls (ll. 112, 116), opens the mind's seeled eye and involves the viewer in fear, fear which is nought but the evidence of the truth of his future and the lie of his present self-sufficiency. Confronted by _a show of eight Kings_ . . . _Banquo following_, he learns the vanity of his banquet-hall victory over the "unreal mockery," determines "to see no more"--that is, to repeat the decision-making of Act III, Scene iv and eliminate the pause between purpose and performance (ll. 145-146). The failure to defeat Banquo leads to the purpose to quell Macduff and his unfortunate issue. The absurdity of the eradication of a family that has no dynastic pretensions is a key to the central meaning of Macbeth's tragedy. Had his professed concern with the security of this throne and with insuring the dynastic succession mentioned in the "To be thus is nothing" soliloquy (III. i. 47 ff.) been primary, the logical pragmatic course to take would be the eradication of Duncan's sons and Fleance, for they are, respectively, the prime immediate and distant threats to Macbeth's sovereignty. The destruction of Macduff's "wife and babes, and all unfortunate souls/That trace him in his line" (ll. 152-53) is in practical terms a gratuitous act of frustration arising from the escape of the intended victim. But as a manifestation of Macbeth's desire to blind the eye of the humane self and his determination to see "no more sights" it is understandable.

It seems that the visions of Banquo's line stretching out "to the crack o' doom" (l.117) and of the tree-bearing crowned child (l. 86) have revealed a truth which is indeed "the worst" he professedly sought but obviously did not desire. Yet the words of the first three visions as he spontaneously interpreted them provide a security antithetical to what the last three visions dramatize visually. Thus the characteristic of self-division, dividing heart's desire and mind's eye, leaves him in a quandary. His problem is to eliminate the obvious disparity between verbal image and visual image and, thus, find the secure truth. His expectation was that word should body forth knowledge, and word proved apt for this function insofar as he could interpret it univocally. But that vision might body forth another truth, just as his own imagination grasped meanings denied by the apparently adequate language of will, is a perplexing dilemma. The dilemma is acknowledged in his imprecations, "Let this pernicious hour/Stand aye accursed in the calendar!" and "Infected be the air whereon they [the Weird Sisters] ride;/And damned be those that trust them!" (IV. i. 33-34; 38-39), and the only solution to it, if he is to vindicate his chosen way of life, lies in granting the supremacy of the expedient self, championing the integrity of the will to success, denying the truth made available to the eye of childlike vision, and asserting the validity of a vocabulary that defines "murther" as "business," not as "horror." The solution lies in the physical quelling of Macduff as symbol of the truths of Nature and of the language that echoes that truth, and because of Macduff's physical absence, in destroying Macduff's being in those that are tied to him by the bonds of blood and faith. It is a solution consistent with Macbeth's earlier recoveries from the insistent revelations of intuitive, conscience-based, supra-rational, visionary truth.[10] It is the equivocator's solution, the effective lying like truth which depends on the ploy of suppressing the compromising facets of the whole truth and asserting those aspects that are not inimical to one's cause. This solution is necessarily self-defeating, since Macbeth is both speaker and hearer in this equivocal exercise: in the manner of one who would have eye wink at hand he is both the deceiver and the duped. His self-deception is exercised on behalf of a cause that has nothing primarily to do with the crown (l. 113) but has everything to do with what necessitates the crowning of thoughts with acts (l. 149)--with the vindication of the sufficiency of the expedient self. The doing of deeds before purpose cools is a device to suppress the ethical self, a trick to ensure that the truths which hinder the manly will are effectively evaded. The protestations, "I'll see no more" (l. 118) and "But no more sights!", though they refer directly to the "shows of eight Kings" vision indirectly reveal the avowed denial of all that the eye of understanding can detect. "That which is" is reduced, therefore, to "nothing" by the will, but the suppression of "that which is" is shown by these true illusions provided by the Witches to be at best an ephemeral accomplishment.

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[10] He dismisses the insight of his meditation on "heaven's cherubins horsed . . . [to blow] the deed in every eye" with the pragmatism of "If we should fail?" He dismisses the truths of the dagger vision with "There's no such thing." He dismisses Banquo's ghost as "unreal mockery" and dismisses the truth revealed in the show of eight Kings with "I'll see no more." In each case, in Machiavellian terms, he becomes what he calls "a man" again.

The prologue to the second major movement of the play, like the prologue to the first, draws our attention to the problematic relationship between language and truth and dramatizes the tragic folly of Macbeth's forcing language (and deeds) to reflect--indeed, to embody--selfish will rather than selfless wisdom. This folly is but a potential in the first prologue, related as it is to the latent evil of what Macbeth calls "suggestion." This folly is an actuality in the second prologue, related as it is to the realized evil of the tyrannical will. It is this realized folly, this divorce of will from wisdom, that Shakespeare analyzes in the next unit of the play's development, Act IV, Scenes ii and iii and Act V, Scene i, a unit whose significance is anchored to the key word "wisdom."

In this phase of the tragic action the significance of Macbeth's departure from the wisdom of his virtuous past is analyzed by speakers who know his deeds but not his heart. Shakespeare thus presents a view of Macbeth that represents more or less an objective commentary on his inhumanity as reflected in the phenomenon of his cruelty. It is a perspective from which we see Macbeth as a Nero-figure removed by cruelty from the community of mankind and, thus, forfeiting his human dignity. The analysis has implications that are similar in kind to a statement once made by Marsilio Ficino on the inhumanity of those characterized by that quality which Lady Macbeth claimed makes one "more than man":

> Why are boys crueler than old men? Insane men crueler than intelligent men? Dull men crueler than the ingenious? Because they are, as it were, less men than the others. Therefore cruel men are called inhumane and brutal. In general those who are removed from the perfect nature of man . . . hate and neglect the human species as something foreign and alien. Nero was, so to speak, not a man but a monster, being akin to man only by his skin. Had he really been a man, he would have loved other men as members of the same body. For as individual men are under one Idea and in one species, they are like one man. Therefore, I believe, the sages called by the name of man himself only that one among all the virtues that loves

> and helps all men as brothers deriving in a long series from one father, in other words, humanity. [emphasis added][11]

Ficino's statement reflects the image of humanitas and the ideal reality reflected in Macbeth's own insistence that the daring to do more than becomes virtuous manliness is a descent to the monstrous, as it also reflects Macduff's "Hell-kite" judgment upon the inhuman destroyer of all his "pretty chickens and their dam" (IV. iii. 17-18). One might say that "Hell-kite" accurately synopsizes the image of the protagonist presented in the scenes under discussion. Yet one must also recognize the limitations of this kind of judgment, because the design of the play no more validates "Hell-kite" as the final judgment on the tragic hero than it allows Malcolm's remark, in the very last scene, about "this dead butcher and his fiendlike Queen" (V. ix. 35) to stand as the play's definitive comment on the protagonist and his dearest partner in sadness. These "objective" comments do have their validity, but as the second major phase of the final movement of the drama reveals, Macbeth is more than a Morality play presenting well taught lessons that such judgments suggest.[12]

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[11] This extract from a letter from Ficino to Tommaso Minerbetti is quoted in Kristeller, Renaissance Thought, I, p. 133. The phrases "community of mankind" and "forfeiting human dignity" earlier in the paragraph are borrowed from Kristeller's introduction to the quoted passage.

[12] Brereton says that though "retribution is the

When Shakespeare re-introduces Macbeth--and Act V, Scene i, the sleep-walking scene prepares us for what is to come--he presents to us a figure whose determination to avoid the "fear" which is insight stresses the existence of those bonds that tie him to humanity and stresses too his awareness of the cost of his efforts to cut those bonds.[13]

Macbeth's determination to crown hideous thoughts with brutal acts and his decision immediately to provide a demonstration of that intent lead to the murder of Lady Macduff and her son. The sequence of scenes is a dramatic exemplum of the release of idea into deed. By distancing the criminal

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main theme . . . it is not the whole point. The sympathy created for Macbeth, or at least the understanding of his position, attenuates the force of plain moral lesson--if such a lesson were intended. The revenge motif . . . is incidental " (Principles of Tragedy, p. 98).

[13] Ribner supports this view: "Macbeth's fears are significant chiefly as a dramatic device to stress his human ties, and thus to serve the larger dramatic design of the play" (Patterns in Shakespearian Tragedy, p. 167, n. 1), as does Foakes, who speaks of a Macbeth for whom we never lose sympathy because, though he "may for the moment blind himself . . .[he] cannot cancel the bond of nature" (Stratford Papers, 1962, p. 162). Curry is less positive: he speaks of the "slight residuum of freedom of choice" which reveals the essential humanity of Macbeth (Philosophical Patterns, p. 135). Rossiter, however, disagrees: he asserts that the hero dies "less as a demi-god than as a gangster" and that "the man who spoke those penetrating lines on wilful opportunism and justice [in I. vii] has been dead long since" (Angel with Horns, p. 229). An extreme example of the many critics misled by the "hell-hound" - "hell-kite" point of view of the antagonists is Robert Pack, who sees the Macbeth of Act V as a man "stripped of his humanity, [and] left with only blind animal defiance fitting the beast he has become . . . . He has ceased to be human." Pack goes on to say that by the end of the play, "we have lost all compassion and sympathy for

from the crime, Shakespeare effects an objective analysis on the level of incident, of what the effort to cancel Nature's bonds signifies, so that we witness the pathetic effects in the world outside of himself of the hero's departure from wisdom. A similar objective analysis, this time provided on the level of dialogue and narrative, is made in the scene at the English court. Then, in the sleep-walking scene, a third form of analysis of the same phenomenon is effected mainly in the form of monologue, but monologue that is intuitive rather than discursive in nature. Each scene evokes pathos, but the pathos directly relates to the plight of the victim rather than of the criminal himself.

There is, nevertheless, an implicit pathos relating to Macbeth's own situation, derived from our awareness of the desperation informing the deeds which add daily gashes to the wounds of a country which sinks, weeping and bleeding, beneath the yoke of tyranny (IV. iii. 39-41). We have seen, for example, that the impulse to kill Macduff's kin arose from the discovery that time, whose coming-on Macbeth has unnaturally hastened in order to wear the crown, now effects a reversal of pattern by anticipating his "dread exploits" (IV. i. 144), bringing in its revenges by depriving the tyrant of his prime victim. We have seen too that the

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Macbeth" ("*Macbeth*: The Anatomy of Loss," *Yale Review*, n.s. 45 (1956), 43-44.

horsemen bringing news of Macduff's escape arrived just as Macbeth stands cursing the revelation which, he had claimed, was the one thing his heart throbbed to know (IV. i. 101), the revelation that his hopes for a denial of the prophecy that granted Banquo royal issue were to be frustrated. Hence the murderous display of life-destroying power is also a display of the impotence of sheer despair. The pathos implicit here is made explicit in the later meditations of Macbeth on the emptiness of his life, when with an honesty that has its own grandeur he faces the chaos of his own creating, recognizing it for what it is,[14] though never approaching an analysis of his being the instrument of its meaninglessness, or expressing regret at having chosen the direction of expediency at the crossroads of his irrevocable choice. The honesty of his encounter with the banality of his "poor player" role is highlighted by the grim determination to withstand his foes and by the self-delusion of his fidelity to what the visionary words of the second meeting with the Witches offered as the basis of his confidence. Word and truth (at least the truth of his life as he unequivocally discovers it) realize their ideal relationship in his commentaries on existence. Word and truth (at least the truth he has chosen from what the Apparitions revealed) fail of this realization of the ideal in his setting himself up in hope. The drama of this self-division must win our sympathy for a king whose anarchy of spirit causes him, like his subjects, to "float upon a wild and violent sea/Each way, and move" (IV. ii. 21-22), lackeying the varying tide of wise insight and foolish blindness, until the ultimate coherence of word and truth can be voiced by Macduff at the crisis of linguistic and soldierly conflict, to solve the riddle that perplexed the confused hero.

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[14] Northrop Frye comments on Macbeth's truth-telling as follows:- "If Othello, as Eliot says, is cheering himself up in his final speech, Macbeth is certainly cheering himself down in his soliloquies, painting a picture of soul-sickness with the greatest accuracy of detail" (Fools of Time [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967], p. 102).

Until the climactic moment of that ultimate revelation, Shakespeare engages our sympathy for all involved in the dire effects of the Macbeth problem, first distancing us from the hero's awareness and concentrating our attention on the objective aspects of his evil, then, as the forces of retribution move relentlessly towards victory, contrasting not only their power with the hero's powerlessness, on the outward level of action, but contrasting also the "valiant fury" that is rampant soldierly rashness with the moments of clear-sighted awareness which are the primary form of retribution in the last Act, and which constitute the hero's anagnorisis. The unfolding of these dramatic contrasts is keyed to the words "wisdom" and "fear."

That Macbeth's departure from the wisdom of his virtuous past has infected not only his own way of life but the very life of his country is a primary theme in the scenes under discussion. To Lady Macduff, her husband's flight seems to partake of Macbeth's restless ecstasy--she calls it "madness" (IV. ii. 3)--whereas to Rosse that same flight is evidence of the wisdom of one who sees in the "fits o' th' season" and the cruelty of the times (ll. 17-18) a reflection of the tyrant's madness and fear and who discovers, in the chaos of relativism, that his virtue makes him a traitor.

The problem of the chaos of relativism and the problem of discovering a mode of wise action in a country which mirrors its king's divided being inform the three major discussions of this scene. With Rosse, Lady Macduff asserts that what made her husband "fly the land" (l. 1) was the"fear" that is cowardice (l. 4), a fear irrational and unnatural and contrary to love (ll. 6-14). For Lady Macduff wisdom is antithetical to the betrayal of the "natural touch" (l. 9) discoverable in the diminutive wren in its unequal contest with the predatory owl. For Lady Macbeth, on the contrary, wisdom is nothing other than murderous virtù: she too accused her husband of greatness in fear and nothingness in love, but precisely because he did not lack the "natural touch," as he showed in his disinclination to mirror desire in "act and valour"--in other words, in his hesitations about playing the role of predatory owl.[15]

Lady Macduff's attitude towards her husband's lack of wisdom is perhaps more convincing than Rosse's apologia for Macduff as a man wise rather than fearful (l. 5), as one who "is noble, wise, judicious, and best knows/The fits o' th' season" in a Scotland which itself so mirrors its king's restless ecstasy that subject and monarch alike are perplexed by the problem of relativism: "we are traitors,/ And do not know ourselves" (IV. ll. 17-18). Implicit in these contrary interpretations of Macduff's secret flight are antithetical concepts of wisdom. Rosse's concept is related to wisdom as knowledge, Lady Macduff's to wisdom as prudence--that is, as right reason exercised in practical matters. Her view implies the supremacy of will over intellect, and implies too that wisdom manifests itself in active love, even in the hopeless cause of the hapless wren. His view implies the contrary, the identification of wisdom with rational grasp of what Augustine called *scientia rerum humanarum*[16] rather than with active virtue. Hence he advocates "patience" (ll. 2, 15) in his hearer, a virtue which is the passive complement to his view of the wise. These contrary attitudes reflect the polarized contrasts in the theory of wisdom proposed by Bovillus in his *Liber de Sapientia*, wherein wisdom is a property of the contemplative man who accumulates a body of knowledge, and by Charron in *De la Sagesse*, wherein wisdom is a code of ethical precepts actively reflected in the prudent man's behaviour.[17] The contraries implied by Rosse and Lady Macduff reflect the dissociation between knowledge and behaviour intrinsic in Macbeth's departure from the wholeness of virtuous life in the climactic choice in Act I, Scene vii. Macbeth's active virtue exercised on behalf of his good King and his knowledge of the truths that validate ideal manhood as revealed especially in the "If it were done" soliloquy combined to justify the honour with which the speeches of his admirers clothed him. Once Macbeth's choice had sundered the customary unison of wise insight and wise action in his way of life and, consequently, wise action became perverted into the exercise of *virtù* rather than natural virtue, Macbeth involved himself in a parody of Lady Macduff's concept of wisdom and in a rejection of Rosse's. He does indeed give will supremacy over intellect, not in the cause of right reason however, but rather for the opposite cause, the determination to outrun and escape from it. Thus his fidelity to this commitment is a perverse parody of the prudence so important to Lady Macduff. He rejects Rosse's "wisdom" by rejecting both the limited insight into the affairs of time-bound men that Rosse has in mind and the insights into a higher reality imaginatively perceived in quasi-ecstatic contemplation of the timeless significance of what "suggestion" prompted.

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[15] In the works of Shakespeare the owl is almost invariably associated not with wisdom but with night, death and beasts of prey. The one notable exception is the "song of Hiems" at the end of *Love's Labour's Lost*, a song of mellow wisdom sung by the owl. The owl in *Macbeth* (and "Howlet's wing, too") is invariably associated with destruction (cf. II. ii. 3, 15; II. iv. 13; IV. ii. 11; and III. v. 17). When King Lear adjures all roofs, choosing "to be a comrade of the owl and wolf (II. iv. 205), he echoes an association made earlier in *Venus and Adonis*, "No noise but owls' and wolves' death-boding cries" (l. 165). Similarly, "The owl, night's herald, shrieks", in *The Rape of Lucrece* (l. 531) anticipates "It was the owl that shriek'd, the fatal bellman/Which gives the stern'st good-night" (*Macbeth*, II. ii. 3). Tamora, in *Titus Andronicus*, makes a nightly owl/fatal raven association (II. iii. 97) similar to that in *Macbeth* and does so in a speech that resounds with anticipatory echoes of the language of Lady Macbeth and of the Witches (especially in IV. i). This view of the owl may be traditional. Bartholomaeus (or, perhaps, Batman) speaks of the temple-haunting "owle" which has "her fill of oyle of lampes" by night. He does not provide any intimation of the owl's association with wisdom (see *Batman uppon Bartholome*, XII, v, pp. 179-80).

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[16] Augustine associates wisdom (*sapientia*) with things divine, knowledge (*scientia*) with things human. (*De trinitate*, 25). See Bourke, *The Essential Augustine*, p. 40.

[17] See Rice, *The Renaissance Idea of Wisdom*, Chapter VI.

It is obvious from the Rosse-Lady Macduff dialogue that Macduff, the voice of truth, is characterized more by Rosse's notion of the wise than by its contrary. It is obvious too that it is called wisdom, not of Macduff, but of men who possess what Charron called preude prudence,[18] wisdom which is the combination of self-knowledge, knowledge of one's necessities and how to provide for them, and scepticism about the apparent truth conveyed in word and gesture--all exercised in harmony with the natural law[19]--that will restore Scotland to harmony once Macbeth's folly has reached the end of its inevitable consequences. Until such a man is discovered the question "Who is wise?" cannot be answered, for until then human nature in Macbeth's land will flounder in the chaotic puzzlement emanating from the unnatural will of tyranny. Such a man will be discovered in Malcolm, who has learned from Macbeth's guile the caution that reflects Banquo's wise scepticism and learned from Edward's piety, as from the sanctity of his own parents, how to harness virtue to nature's needs and, thus, restore both "unity on earth" and "universal peace" and preserve the "sweet milk of concord," reversing the achievements of the erstwhile worthy Glamis.

But until such a man is found, men with Macduff's impudent integrity, free of self-interest, and men with the ineffectual honesty, combined with self-regard, of Rosse and the later Messenger in Act IV, Scene ii will desert the innocent, leaving them victims of merciless savagery and questioners bewildered by the unanswerable. Lady Macduff and her son will fail to solve the problem of defining "traitor" and "father"--until their dying words defy the definitions provided by Macbeth's henchmen. Lady Macduff says that "fear" proves her husband a "traitor" and flight proves him metaphorically "dead" to his "fatherless" family. The knowledge of the evident betrayal of familial bonds manifests itself in Lady Macduff's words of accusation, but her attempt to harmonize word and knowledge is in vain, because her knowledge is but a partial perception of truth. Her assertion that Macduff is a traitor involves the identification of "Equivocator" with "traitor," for she defines "traitor" as "one that swears and lies" (l. 47): thus the integrity of Macduff on the one hand--his "Sir, Not I" (III. vi. 40)--and his seeming denial of that integrity on the other--"His flight was madness" (IV. ii. 3)--appear to be as blameworthy as the equivocator's swearing in both the scales against either scale and not dissimilar in kind from Macbeth's ability to mouth the loyal subject's protestations of love and do his bloody deed. The problem of knowledge and the problem of action are one for her, and she becomes the voice of Scotland in her statement about the problem confronting all who live in Macbeth's perverse world, a world that is, we note, "earthly" and governed by the ethic of relativism:

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[18] De la Sagesse I (preface), p. xxxii.

[19] For Cicero the ideal of virtuous life is expressed in vivere secundum naturam (De Officiis, III. iii.) and he assures his reader that following nature's guidance is an infallible guarantee against error (De Officiis, I. xviii.). These ideas are commonplaces in the lore of the humanists.

> Whither should I fly?
> I have done no harm. But I remember now
> I am in this earthly world, where, to do harm
> Is often laudable; to do good, sometime
> Accounted dangerous folly: why then, alas!
> Do I put up that womanly defence,
> To say, I have done no harm?
>
> (IV. ii. 71-77)

Her words are a key to the play's meaning, a key to the need for the discovery of that wisdom which will restore values and language and just deserts from the chaos to which Macbeth's commitment to the merely earthly world has reduced them.

If Lady Macduff, in Act IV, Scene ii, is shown confronting the problem of the Macbeth evil from the point of view of the naive victim, Lady Macbeth, in Act V, Scene i, is shown "meditating" on that problem from the point of view of one who calculatedly rejected her womanly defense against evil and championed the manly offence which was to confound all unity on earth. She, once the advocate of the wisdom of expediency, once the voicer of orisons to the spirits of murder, knowing no fear but that heaven might forbiddingly peep through the blanket of darkness in which she tried to cloak herself, is shown in the affliction of terrible dreams that confound her advocated wisdom and reveal the limits of the earthly world in which she taught Macbeth to act. The doctor's statement, "You see, her eyes are open" (V. i. 23) is unwittingly ambiguous: to the Waiting Gentlewoman, it is a literal comment on a physical phenomenon and, to the audience, a symbolic statement on Lady Macbeth's discovery of the truths which her will was geared to deny. The whole scene serves as a commentary on the truths which transcend the limits of expediency, just as her own words now, "What's done cannot be undone" (l. 64), reveal a truth suppressed in "what's done is done" (III. ii. 12). Her encounter with the timeless meaning of deeds which should, if her rationalism were valid, have remained "done" and done with in time and place, just as guilt should have been removed with a little water, is dramatized in the non-sequential nature of her references: "Out, damned spot!" precedes now the bell-ringing signal for Duncan's demise, "why then 'tis time to do't" (ll. 34-35). Banquo's death and Duncan's, "Infirm of purpose" (II. ii. 51) and "You look but on a stool" (III. iv. 67) all now conjoin in her great perturbation:

> Wash your hands, put on your night-gown; look
> not so pale.--I tell you again, Banquo's
> buried: he cannot come out on's grave.
>
> (ll. 59-61)

The death of Lady Macduff and the appearance of Banquo's ghost are reversed in time and yet associated with her own stained hands following a still earlier murder (ll. 41-43). This is tantamount to a subconscious or intuitive knowledge of the significance of things never encountered imaginatively.

But knowledge is dissociated from contrition; the will to crime and the punishment for crime co-exist; her intransigence reflects Macbeth's, and like Macbeth's it is the main source of retribution for the perverse integrity of the self-justifying exercise of will. The light of truth is symbolized in the candle she has continually by her, the encounter with truth symbolized in her open eyes, but the dark purposes of will are re-echoed, not rejected; thus the clash between will and insight is an unending battle, and the consequences of the hero's departure from wisdom are no less powerfully defined here than in the scene featuring doomed Lady Macduff.

The Lady Macduff-Lady Macbeth scenes frame the scene at Edward's court, in which the restoration of wisdom is of prime dramatic importance as a counter-measure to Macbeth's dissociation of virtus heroica from moral virtue.[20] The destructibility of the Duncan order and the tragic threat to the chief defender of that order, Macbeth, lay in the unpreparedness of the absolutist adequately to defend himself and his reality against the artifice that divorces mind's construction from facial expression and destroys the ideal relationship between truth and verbal expression. Equivocal word and gesture deprive that world of its coherence: "the new philosophy calls all in doubt." The wisdom of the Duncan world, which lay in the ethically approvable action of the idealist, has proved its insufficiency in dealing with the danger of rationalistic relativism, as is evidenced in Duncan's death, Macbeth's perverse self-denial, and in heaven's feeling echo of Scotland's distress as it yells out "like syllable of dolour" (IV. iii. 8). But the night of these disasters will, as Malcolm assures us, unfailingly find the day (IV. iii. 240), and the promise of day is based on the alliance of Macduff's truth with Malcolm's wisdom, as Act IV, Scene iii illustrates. But Malcolm's wisdom, which will restore the values of the Duncan world, is different in kind from the idealistic, hence vulnerable, wisdom of that world: the dramatic assertion that is Act IV, Scene iii has similarities to Donne's assertion in "The First Anniversary" that a memory of the old and better world remains as a "glimmering light" that "creates a new world" which, whatever the threats to its sufficiency, "may be safer, being told/The dangers and diseases of the old."[21] The new wisdom partakes of the knowledge of the fallen world and the ethical idealism of the ruined but better world. The nature of this wisdom has already been intimated in the sagacious ironies of Rosse in the prologue to the second major movement of the play, with their echoes of the sagacious scepticism of Banquo in the prologue to the first. The charactersitics of this wisdom are a prudent distrust of all semblance allied to an unswerving commitment to goodness: what this means is the cautious adoption of the relativist's philosophic position, hence freedom from the naive expectation that the forms of an ideal world will be reflected in existential facts, and, at the same time, the commitment of the will to the values of the good life supported by the philosophy of the absolutists and discovered in the moral promptings of nature. Relativistic prudence combined with the ethical probity demanded by natural law is what will recreate the Duncan order, whose essence was absolutistic faith combined with the same ethical probity. Relativism harnessed to Natural Law is the order that will replace the chaos of relativism harnessed to naturalism. Malcolm is the embodiment of Machiavellian virtù in harmony with the cardinal virtues--and especially with justice, the foremost of these.

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[20] Aristotle in Nicomachean Ethics, III, 7 defines courage in moral terms: "He is courageous who endures and fears the right things, for the right motive, in the right manner, and at the right time, and who displays confidence in a similar way. For a courageous man feels and acts according to the merits of each case and as reason guides him. Now the end of every activity corresponds to the characteristic that produces it. This also applies to a courageous man: courage is noble, and, accordingly, its end is noble too; for a thing is defined by its end." Malcolm and Macduff are associated with the restoration of courage to its alliance with right reason and justice.

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[21] See "An Anatomy of the World: The First Anniversary," ll. 67-88, in John Donne's Poetry, ed. A.L. Clements (New York: Norton and Company, Inc., 1966), pp. 70-71.

Malcolm's relativism and the manner in which it supersedes and still complements the absolutism of the Duncan world are immediately focused upon in the beginning of Act IV, Scene iii. Confronted with the persuasive sincerity of

Macduff, Duncan's son shows his awareness of how to find the mind's construction whatever face or word affect, declaring immediately his scepticism, which he variously labels his "doubts" (l. 25) and "jealousies" (l. 29), in words which indicate his freedom from the absolutist norm of knowledge informed by faith: for him knowledge precedes belief, just as knowledge precedes and informs responsible action:

> What I believe, I'll wail,
> What know, believe: and what I can redress,
> As I shall find the time to friend, I will.
>
> (ll. 8-10)

This is a scepticism which in no way denies the validity of the absolutist's truth but which affirms the difficulty, if not the impossibility, of attaining to truth. He acknowledges that Macduff's words may, "perchance," perfectly embody truth (l. 11), but also contrasts the "wisdom" of the expedient, which sacrifices "innocent lamb" to "angry god" (ll. 14-17), with the "modest wisdom" (l. 119), espoused by himself, which is equally free of the destructive expediency of realists such as Edmund and the defenceless credulity (l. 120) of idealists such as Duncan. He is prepared for treachery's wearing the vizard of honesty (ll. 13-18), yet his relativism is not pessimistic cyncism, for he allows that his bias of thought cannot "transpose" the reality of Macduff's disposition (l. 21) and that "fair" is fair and Grace is Grace, however successfully "foul" may play its deceptive role (ll. 23-24). His assertion, "Angels are bright still, though the brightest fell" (l. 22) refers not only to Satan, but to Macbeth, and, for this reason, his apology for his own relativistic caution--

> Let not my jealousies be your dishonours,
> But mine own safeties: *you may be rightly just*
> *Whatever I shall think*
>
> (ll. 29-31; emphasis mine)

and

> I speak not as in absolute fear of you
>
> (l. 38)

may be interpreted as a form of relativistic freedom which contrasts with, and, as it were, replies to, the limited relativism of Macbeth, who insists that reality conform unequivocally to his own mode of thought.

Malcolm shows that his wisdom is not only the knowledge of what should be and what is in the fallen world but also the ethical commitment to active virtue in its private and public aspects. This is evident in the second movement of Act IV, Scene iii, in which he probes Macduff's intention. First he imputes to himself the absence of active virtue,

> Yet my poor country
> Shall have more vices than it had before,
> More suffer, and more sundry ways than ever
> By him that shall succeed.
>
> (ll. 46-49)

Then, when Macduff responds to this opinion with words that are a judgment upon the vicious man's unfitness for monarchy and even for life (ll. 102-103), Malcolm unspeaks his own "detraction" and abjures the "taints and blames" he has laid upon himself (ll. 123-24). Malcolm's self-denigration is an ironic revelation of his knowledge of the "king-becoming graces" (l. 91) and his judgment upon the unnatural royalty of a monarch whose departure from wisdom poured, indeed, "the sweet milk of concord into Hell" and confounded all unity in the universe and on earth (ll. 98-99). But knowledge alone is not wisdom and Malcolm, when he switches from the craft of ironic utterance to the guilelessness of direct statement, commits himself to a programme of action that accords with the ethical integrity (l. 116) of the good man's will; the earlier declaration of his readiness to redress known evil (ll. 8-10) is re-stated: "What I am truly,/ Is thine, and my poor country's, to command" (ll. 131-32).

The significance of this commitment to integrity is, then, revealed in the discussion of King Edward's miraculous cure of the disease called "the Evil", especially in the distinction between beneficent doing, which is undeniable ("miraculous work . . ./Which often . . . I have seen him do" [ll. 147-49]) and knowledge, which is unattainable ("how he solicits Heaven/Himself knows best" [ll. 149-50]). The account of the good king's beneficence, because of its juxtaposition with Malcolm's declaration of his will to virtue, constitutes a dramatic definition of the young man's wisdom and a promise of the restorative properties inherent in his royalty of nature which will be effective antidote to the multiplying villainies of nature.

The definition of wisdom as active virtue is but the basic principle established in this scene as antithesis to Macbeth's departure from that wisdom in Act I, Scene vii, the climax of the corresponding movement of the rising action. If the promise of complete restoration is to be fully dramatized as solution to the Macbeth problem, Malcolm must show a commitment to the restoration of language to its moral function and the restoration of soldierliness to the wholeness of which Macbeth deprived it.

Macduff's role is primarily that of truth-teller, here as elsewhere in the play. His account of the state of Scotland in the opening lines,

> Each new morn,
> New widows howl, new orphans cry; new sorrows
> Strike heaven on the face, that it resounds
> As if it felt with Scotland, and yell'd out
> Like syllable of dolour
>
> (ll. 5-8)

has a validity as truth that is reinforced by the death of his family in the scene that has just ended. His "O my breast,/Thy hope ends here!" (ll. 114-15) is a totally selfless declaration echoing his dismay that his country's future is to be deprived of all good, however qualified. His inability to respond securely to Malcolm's equivocal saying and unsaying the catalogue of royal wisdom is characteristic of his honesty, just as his demand to Rosse, "Be not niggard of your speech: how goes 't?" (l. 180) reveals an intolerance of the equivocation invested in the word "peace."[22] He wins Rosse to the language of uncompromising truth, getting him to speak of Macbeth's manly achievements in "words/That should be howled out in the desert air,/Where hearing cannot latch them" (ll. 193-95), just as he had previously won the prudently suspicious Malcolm to the reflection, in unambiguous language, of the truth of Siward's setting forth "with ten thousand warlike men" (l. 134) to try the "chance of goodness" (l. 134) in a kingdom where the evil of the flower-hidden serpent causes "good men's lives/[to] Expire before the flowers in their caps,/Dying or ere they sicken" (ll. 171-73). Malcolm's defence of this language of truth is shown when Macduff responds to the news of the slaughter of his family with the rhetoric of silence and Malcolm takes it upon himself to be the prompter of words which should be articulated: "Give sorrows words" (l. 211). He, the king of restoration, thus manifests his ability to counterbalance Macbeth's equivocation--heinous lying and cogging--with a use of the equivocator's linguistic camouflage that is calculated to elicit rather than distort truth. His similar tactic later with the branches of Birnam shows how his guile, harnessed to the desire to establish an order of honesty, is necessary so that guileless men of integrity can once again thrive.

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[22] Macd. The Tyrant has not batter'd at their peace?/ Rosse. No; they were well at peace, when I did leave 'em (ll. 178-79).

Once Rosse's words confirm those of Macduff and the integrity of both allies is affirmed, Malcolm takes on the good soldier's task of redeeming martial valour from what Macbeth has done to it in adopting the soldiership appropriate not to the ranks of virtue but to the "legions/ Of horrid Hell" (ll. 55-56). His task as the new possessor of the wisdom that guides valour, is to restore valour and honour to what these virtues represented for Banquo when he was proffered "honours" on condition that he "cleave to [Macbeth's] consent" (II. i. 25). Banquo refused to ally himself with Macbeth's will because of his commitment to honour as integrity. Malcolm's aptness for his present task is shown in his promise to cleave to the will of honest Macduff, "child of integrity" (IV. i. 31), and in his successful attempt to convert his present hearer's knowledge of rampant injustice into the moral action of nature's justicers.

By leading his men as avengers of ravaged innocence he is, one might say, repeating the dying Banquo's behest that revenge--that is, equitable retribution--should redress willed horror.

In this scene, the division between feeling and unfeeling manhood created at the moment of Macbeth's choice is eliminated. Macduff so responds to the news of the Hell-kite's "fell swoop" that his only rhetoric is silence. The tendency to "play the woman with [his] eyes" (l. 230) and the unwillingness to play "the braggart with [his] tongue" (l. 231) are proof of his humanity; his condition is antithetical to the wrenching of human nature necessary to Macbeth's chosen state. His need to feel his misfortune "like a man" (l. 222) is, Malcolm suspects, a potential for passivity and despair, which must be converted to a potential for that very programme of action suggested by Macduff himself before Rosse's tidings silenced him:

> Let us . . .
> Hold fast the mortal sword, and like good men
> Bestride our downfall birthdom.
> (ll. 2-4)

Malcolm in his role as energizer of the forces of good, encourages Macduff to express his grief in the rhetoric of hard manliness exercised in the medicinal action of great revenge (ll. 214-215):

> Dispute it like a man. (l. 220)

and

> Be this the whetstone of your sword; let grief
> Convert to anger; blunt not the heart, enrage it.
>
> (ll. 228-29)

Macduff responds positively to this advice, recognizing that the enraged heart is in harmony with heaven's will and that the language of manly tongue and manly sword is the expression of righteous indignation:

> Gentle Heavens,
> Cut short all intermission; front to front,
> Bring thou this fiend of Scotland, and myself;
> Within my sword's length set him; if he 'scape,
> Heaven forgive him too!
>
> (ll. 231-35)

Malcolm's "This tune goes manly" (l. 235) is the seal of approval upon Macduff's sentiments; for him, the actions of warriors fighting in the ranks of righteousness are similar in kind to the healing touch of the saintly Edward, whose hand Heaven sanctifies (l. 144). Malcolm proclaims that their cause is aided by "the Powers above." These are Banquo's "merciful Powers," combatants against under-nature and it is likely that they are the voices of Heaven which Lady Macbeth feared might cry "Hold, hold!" But Malcolm is no Richard II. He does not simply rely on heavenly battalions; his cause is aided by "Gracious England" who has lent him an army under the command of the "good Siward," the best soldier in Christendom (ll. 189-92), an army furnished to "try the chance of goodness" (l. 136) and destroy the foison of evil in unnatural, grief-teeming (l. 176) Scotland.

The expression, "the Powers above/Put on their instruments" (ll. 238-39) is complex in meaning. It resounds with suggestions of the manifold aspects of retribution soon to be visited upon Macbeth. The heavenly Powers are forces antithetical to the "Spirits/That tend on mortal thoughts," those "sightless substances/[that] wait on Nature's mischief" (I. v. 40-50), and the "instruments" they don, symbolically the arms of righteousness, are to wreak retribution for a deed whose hideousness Macbeth had confronted in the "fatal vision" of the bloody dagger, the image of the "instrument [he] was to use" (II. i. 43). On a more literal level, the "instruments" of the heavenly Powers are the forces to be led by Siward and Malcolm, and it is their function to undo the effects of Macbeth's co-operation with what Banquo called the "instruments of Darkness" (I. iii. 124): significantly , Macduff's final expose of the "equivocation of the fiend" is the very fulfilment of the "betray[al]/In deepest consequence" that is the subject of Banquo's admonition on the heath (I. iii. 126). The phrase "put on their instruments" is sufficiently imprecise to allow us to entertain the literal interpretation and also to imagine "instruments" as active arms of righteousness or speaking trumpets of doom or (and this is more likely) both at once.[23] Thus they don their "instruments" to trumpet-tongue the condemnation of Macbeth's horror, as Macduff did earlier (II. iii. 82) and inspire the armies that are their instruments militantly to defy Macbeth's naturalism and defeat it, as Macduff will later do. The phrase, thus, contains suggestions of the combined rhetoric of sword and tongue which will answer the lie of Macbeth's self-serving language and deeds.

The function of Act IV, Scene iii, therefore, is to dramatize discursively the restoration of manliness to wisdom: manliness here is, once again, "worthy," "noble," "smack[ing] of honour," virtuous "valiant," and as independent of fortune's fickleness as it is dependent on virtue's constancy. At the end of the scene Macduff has been taught to play Macbeth's initial role of "justice with valour arm'd" (I. ii. 29). The whole sense of retribution conveyed by the scene quarantees implicitly that when he meets his adversary "Point against point" (I. ii. 57), "front to front" (IV. iii. 232) he will be a "Bellona's bridegroom, lapp'd in proof" (I. ii. 55) who will curb the lavish spirit of his adversary as assuredly as Macbeth did the disloyal Thane of Cawdor.

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[23] The literal interpretation of "instruments" as armies and the metaphorical interpretation of the word as trumpets may be defended by referring to Malcolm's later order, "Make all our trumpets speak; give them all breath,/ Those clamorous harbingers of blood and death" (V. vi. 9-10). Malcolm's words bear at least some echo of "angels trumpet-tongued," since he is Duncan's son, avenging the "deep damnation of [his father's] taking off" (I. vii. 20).

The second major movement of the play's falling action, Act V, Scenes ii-vii, dramatizes, as earlier stated, the contrast between the confident strengthening of the forces of retribution and restoration and the weakening of Macbeth's morale, a weakening paradoxically suggested in the strength of Macbeth's freedom from fear. To study the Macbeth of these scenes without reference to the re-establishment of truth and wisdom in the preceding unit of the play's structure is to discover that, indeed, "renown, and grace, is dead" (II. iii. 94) and to recognize how the lie of "Had I but died an hour before this chance" (II. iii. 91) has become the sad truth of the three soliloquies in this unit--the "fall'n into the sere, the yellow leaf" speech (V. iii. 19-28), the meditation on his having "supp'd full with horrors" (V. v. 9-15) and its continuation, following the report of Lady Macbeth's death, in the bleak "To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow" confession. But to study Macbeth's utterances and actions in terms of the counterpointing of scenes that is the basic structural principle of the unit is to discover how the re-established truths of Act IV, Scene iii especially are repeated in the words and actions of Macbeth's adversaries and serve as wholesome contrast to the rashness and nihilism of the desperate protagonist.

For example, Macbeth's discussion of "curses, not loud, but deep, mouth-honour" replacing the now unattainable "honour, love, obedience, troops of friends" (V. iii. 25-27) counterpoints Cathness's declaration that he and his confederates march on to meet the "med'cine of the sickly weal" and formally "give obedience where 'tis truly ow'd" (V. ii. 25-27). These lines also counterpoint the "Throws physic to the dogs" attitude of Macbeth who, still, would like to purge from his sickly commonweal the very "med'cine" mentioned by Cathness. Likewise, Macbeth's abuse of the fearful "lily-liver'd boy" (V. iii. 15) confirms Angus' declaration that "those he commands move only in command,/Nothing in love" (V. ii. 19-20) and contrasts with the loyalty offered to Malcolm by "unrough youths" who "protest their first of manhood" (ll. 10-11) in an enterprise which all "dew the sovereign flower (l. 30) and destroy the "yellow leaf" (V. iii. 23).

There is similar use of counterpoint in the paired preparation-for-battle scenes, Act V, Scenes iv. and v. In the first, as the combined armies take up the deceptive boughs of Birnam which are to reveal truth so dramatically, Macduff and Siward voice their reliance on "industrious soldiership" (l. 16) rather than "thoughts speculative" born of unsure rumour and begetting "unsure hopes" (l. 19). In the second, Macbeth relies mainly on "thoughts speculative"--on his univocal interpretation of "Fear not, till Birnam wood/

Do come to Dunsinane" (V. v. 45)--and begins to discover the unsure quality of the hopes born thereof:

> I pull in resolution; and begin
> To doubt th' equivocation of the fiend,
> That lies like truth.
>
> (V. v. 42-44)

The industrious soldiership of his resolute and wisely sceptical antagonists highlights his unwise credulity and the cynical scepticism that succeeds it, and helps us evaluate the pointless, meaninglessly industrious irascibility that complements this scepticism:

> I 'gin to be aweary of the sun,
> And wish th' estate o' th' world were now undone.--
> Ring the alarum bell!--Blow, wind! Come, wrack!
> At least we'll die with harness on our back.
>
> (V. v. 49-52)

The contrast of such valour exercised as part of the idiot's chaotic tale (V. v. 27) with valour restored to justice of cause is neatly effected by the juxtaposition of scenes. Soldiership which promotes life, ("chamber will be safe" [V. iv. 2]) is contrasted with soldiership which promotes chaos ("Come wrack" [V. v. 51]). The confidence of his enemies draws our attention not only to Macbeth's waning confidence but also to his constancy in that determination that, should his chosen world prove its insufficiency, the alternative he seeks is not the restoration of heroic virtue to the curbs of justice or right reason but sheer disorder ('[Let] the treasure/Of Nature's germens tumble all together,/ Even till destruction sicken" [IV. i. 58-60]).

In the same way, Scenes vi and vii, in which we see the beginnings of the climactic conflict ("Your leafy screens throw down" [V. vi. 1] and *Enter young Siward* [V. vii. 4]). Malcolm's emphasis on the order of his battle-plans and his call to make the trumpets speak ally him with the virtues of his father, chiefly because they remind us of the order of Duncan's kingship and what Macbeth had to say about the "trumpet-tongu'd" appeal of Duncan's virtues. Macbeth, by contrast, "cabin'd, cribb'd, confin'd" and bear-like "tied . . . to a stake" (V. vii. 2) is without order, without plans, dependent only on animalistic fury, and forced by necessity to "fight the course".[24] His "bear" image is the appropriate symbol for the manliness he has chosen when he rejected the knowledge of angelic virtue. But the prime appeal of those scenes lies in our response to the primary action, Macbeth's experience of suffering, not in our witnessing the growing strength of the invading forces as evidence of the moral order asserting itself. In the primary action we see Macbeth experiencing what he had earlier known to be inevitable: in the "If it were done" soliloquy, his imaginative encounter with the nature of the crime was the knowledge of regicide theoretically encountered. This form of knowledge (associated with the Latin verb scire) he chose to suppress, in his choice of the equivocating self. But the consequences of the crime soon show themselves to be practically as well as theoretically inevitable, and Macbeth's experience of suffering is the knowledge of those consequences encountered in a different mode (associated with the verb cognoscere, as opposed to scire). The experience of suffering is then the "cognizance" of effects that replaces the "science" of principles. The one form of knowledge complements the other, and Macbeth's suffering is all the more intense in that his fidelity to the equivocating self makes contrition unthinkable, though contrition would be the logical issue of his recognition of the complementarity of his two kinds of knowledge of the moral dimensions of regicide.

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[24] It has not been noted that this image of the bear attacked by dogs retrospectively gives unintended irony to "throw physic to the dogs." Malcolm, Siward and their followers have spoken of their role in terms of "med'cine" and "medicines" and of Scotland as "the sickly weal." Hence Macbeth's theoretical applause of the Doctor, could he purge the country to "a sound and pristine health," is, ironically, due to the bear-baiting dogs to whom he recklessly throws the needed physic. This is a subtle but significant example of Macbeth's characteristic self-destructiveness.

In that movement of the play in which Macbeth is absent from the stage and in which the nature of his evil and the remedies for it are analyzed, the over-riding theme and the corresponding key word was "wisdom." In the succeeding movement, when we see Macbeth in his preparations for the push which will cheer or disseat him, his constant theme is the defeat of fear and the word constantly on his lips is, appropriately, "fear." Throughout the play the word "fear" is shown to partake of the ambiguity that gives words such as "man," "courage," "fair," "foul," "deed," "nothing," "good" and "ill" the status of major characters in the inner action of the tragedy. This discussion has already dealt at length with the role of "fear" in the central war of words, with the clash between its interpretation as cowardice --the physical fear of undertaking manly deeds--and its interpretation as the conscience, wisdom or insight of the ethically aware individual who is unwilling to perform deeds that outrage civility and morality. Lady Macduff's equating her husband's unwise flight to England with physical fear is of a kind with the notion, earlier associated with Macbeth's ethical awareness, that what the pragmatist interprets as cowardice may be otherwise discoverable as the wisdom of the morally committed soul. The great moments of dramatic crisis have presented us with a fearful Macbeth, a non-coward frightened by evidence of the moral significance of deeds he would dare and did dare to do, a non-coward appalled and weakened by the brainsick thinking and childish vision that was nothing if not keen insight or the knowledge of things as they are in a morally meaningful existence. The means of escape from the intensity of the dramatic crises referred to was, consistently, to will to dismiss the fear experienced as "nothing."

Hecate has predicted that, following his second encounter with the Witches, Macbeth's hopes will bear him above "wisdom, grace, and fear" (III. v. 31), and Macbeth has already strengthened the validity of her prediction by deciding to "take a bond of Fate" in order to "tell *pale-hearted fear* it lies" (IV. i. 85; emphasis mine). How far his hopes will enable him to transcend "grace" will be acknowledged by Macbeth in his "bear-like" picture of himself as the antithesis of soldierly and courtly, not to mention moral and spiritual, grace. How far he has succeeded in transcending wisdom and fear is the major concern of Act V, Scenes ii-vii, for, in these scenes, where we see Macbeth for the first time since his grim decision to slaughter the Macduffs, he is a pathetic example of confusion, grimly fearless, and constantly mouthing the word "fear."

His confusion should alert us to the likelihood that his escape from fear is an escape from the wisdom that once made him the epitome of worthy manliness. This confusion is remarkable: we find him at once refusing to hear reports, because words (the reporter's) may reflect truth, and declaring his immunity from fear, because words (the Witches') must reflect truth:

> Bring me no more reports; let them fly all:
> Till Birnam wood remove to Dunsinane,
> *I cannot taint with fear* . . . .
> . . . . .The spirits that know
> All mortal consequence have pronounc'd me thus:
> *Fear not* . . . .

> The mind I sway by, and the heart I bear,
> Shall _never_ sag with doubt, nor _shake with fear_.
>
> (V. iii. 1-10; emphasis mine)

He wishes his freedom from fear reflected in his subjects ("Go prick thy face, and over-red thy fear" [l. 14], "Hang those that talk of fear" [l. 361]) and incantatorily he boosts his wilted spirits, plucking from memory any and all rooted sorrows: "_I will not be afraid of death_ and bane [the poison, or "perilous stuff/Which weighs upon the heart"?]/Till Birnam forest come to Dunsinane" (V. iii. 59-60). In all this "fear" and "cowardice" seem to him synonymous. Yet we are reminded that the potential for "fear" to reverberate with unwanted significance exists, though Macbeth does not directly acknowledge it: for example, when in Act V, Scene iii, he inquires of the doctor,

> Canst thou not minister to a mind diseas'd,
> Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow,
> Raze out the written troubles of the brain?
>
> (ll. 40-42)

we can scarcely avoid noticing how close he is to recalling his own need to "raze out" all words that might intervene between grim intention and dire act and how close he is to remembering his own "fanciful" but real encounter with the real-unreal mockery in the banquet-hall. He should be close to acknowledging that his current concern with fear is of a kind with the awareness underlying "I am afraid to think what I have done;/Look on't again I dare not" (II. ii. 50-51).

The ability or willingness to acknowledge that "fear" or dread that is not of the physical sort is identical to the wisdom of the man of moral probity is characteristic of Macbeth's ethical self. The inability or refusal to make such an acknowledgement characterizes Macbeth's heroic purposefulness in abiding by his commitment to the ethic and vision of the unkind self. In Act V, Scene v, for example, in the presence of the "Liar and slave" who reports the moving of Birnam wood, Macbeth confesses that he pulls in resolution and begins "To doubt th' equivocation of the fiend/That lies like truth" (ll. 42-44). He does confess that his security from fear is jeopardized, and his subsequent words, "Arm, arm, and out! . . . Blow, wind! come, wrack!/At least we'll die with harness on our back" (ll. 46, 51-52), are proof enough that he does not share the fear of lily-livered cowards. Logically, he should acknowledge that his fear or lack of resolution relates to the insufficiency of the limited reality which he himself has equivocally affirmed. He is capable of such an admission: "I 'gin to be aweary of the sun,/And wish th' estate o' th' world were now undone" (ll. 49-50), but he acknowledges the condition of his meaningless existence, not the cause. Hence, he falls short of confessing that his choice of the unkind self was a mistake and, thus, falls short of the logically necessary repudiation of that chosen self. Rather than reaching such a conclusion, he proceeds as if his vision of the ethical self had never existed, and his confession ends not in repentance but in the sheer bravado of the braggart tongue.

The rhetoric of moral evasion has its effectiveness, for it enables Macbeth to cheer himself up and momentarily to forget his weariness. This is evident in his combat with young Siward in Act V, Scene v: Macbeth asserts that he must only fear the man not born of woman (ll. 3-4), exhorts his opponent to fear the fearful name "Macbeth," and finds that the boy cannot discredit his immunity. Hence, he seeks his next opponent with the confidence of a smiling damned villain, who is quite free of fear.

Thus in Act V Macbeth is shown to be fighting a battle of words, as he staunchly defends his univocal definition of "fear." He successfully escapes a return to the ethical awareness that informed "present fears are less than horrible imaginings." His freedom from fear is identical with evasion of those truths he had imaginatively apprehended time and time again until he has successfully banished ghostly Banquo and escaped the recurring insurrection of the Banquo in him, his own moral nature. This is a wilful freedom from metaphysical truths. His wilfulness prevents his acknowledging that when he defended those truths he was so much more an admirable man and in this way, prevents his encounter with the tragic meaning of his tale. By conquering his fear he can meditate honestly on the phenomenon of his existence as an idiot's story but cannot acknowledge the cause of this phenomenon, the essential worthlessness of the barren philosophy he adopted before choosing to kill a king.[25]

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[25] This view of Macbeth's limited anagnorisis differs from earlier readings of Act V. Charlton, for example, finds in the "Sick at heart" soliloquy an expression of the hero's inmost conviction of the moral values he has rejected (Shakesperian Tragedy, p. 154); in this there seems to be a confusion of Macbeth's vision with that of an audience educated by IV. iii. Bradley sees in the same passage and in the "To-morrow" soliloquy gleams of native goodness in the depths of Macbeth (Shakespearean Tragedy, p. 304) but he finds the hero's tragic grandeur in the presence, not in the suppression, of that goodness. Rossiter, on the other hand, finds no goodness "where the meaning of good and evil is denied" (Angel with Horns, p. 228); this view rightly emphasizes the role of will in the ethical life, but does not allow for the wilful denial of beckoning goodness, or for what I have called the suppressed presence of the ethical self. Jan Kott sensitively identifies the nature of Macbeth's ultimate nihilism, but errs in identifying the reality of the Macbeth world with Macbeth's limited final view of things: "In the world of Macbeth," he tells us, "there is no margin left for love, or friendship; not even for desire" (Shakespeare Our Contemporary [London: Methuen, 1967], p. 71). Proser, though he does not notice the play's final ironies, and though his view of Macbeth's paradoxical return to wholeness (using Macduff to destroy himself) is, perhaps, too ingenious, seems to me to strike a proper balance in discussing Macbeth's "agonizing, grotesque, meaningless" and fearful view of life as coexisting with his final faith in the Witches' verbal charms (The Heroic Image, pp. 86-91). Proser suggests that Macbeth's final position is one of forgetfulness of guilt and singleminded dedication to his own "manly image" (p. 91). This interpretation, whatever its limitations, corresponds much more closely to my view of the denouement than the pronouncements of critics such as G. Wilson Knight, J.A. Bryant, and Clifford Davidson. Knight affirms that "Macbeth at the last, by self-knowledge, attains grace" (Imperial Theme, p. 128) when "the mighty principle of good planted in the nature of things . . . asserts itself, condemns him openly, brings him peace . . . . He knows himself a tyrant confessed and wins back integrity of soul" (Wheel of

When the final movement of the tragic action begins, we find Macbeth strutting, not fretting, his hour upon the stage, refusing to play the "Roman fool" by dying on his own sword (V. viii. 1-3). The phrase "Roman fool" defines for us his security in the limited consciousness based on suppression of ethical awareness and recognition of the physical as his only reality. "Roman fool" ironically condemns him, because it suggests to us the Stoic suicide who expresses his indifference to Fortune by a final rejection of the earthly world which is Macbeth's be-all. The Stoic fool is, thus, the wise antithesis to the protagonist, an antithesis that suggests a standard by which we can judge Macbeth's self-sufficiency for the folly it is. He has found in the defeat of the boy Siward the basis for his scorn of the sword's

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Fire , p. 172); this I find incomprehensible, because it implies a theology of contrition that has nothing to do with either the Lutheran doctrine of justification by faith (not clear-sightedness!) or the Thomistic doctrine of the need for co-operation with actual grace, and because it ignores the textual evidence of an obdurate and remorseless Macbeth. Bryant, though theologically more orthodox than Knight, discovers a Macbeth who arrives at the recognition that he has sacrificed his humanity only to find himself qualified for one angelic role, that of apostate black angel (Hippolyta's View, p. 172); this interpretation seems to rest on a desired homiletic ending than on the evidence of the text, as does Miss Jack's and Robert Pack's (See above, p. 196, n.9). Davidson, viewing the ending through the lens of homiletic literature, sees Macbeth as the embodiment of hypocrisy, "naked in his sin before God," a man whose "apostacy deprives him of all sensitivity," a hero whose ending is the dramatization of the peroration of a sermon on tyranny (The Primrose Way, pp. 70-71). The homiletic bias does not always lend to such uncomplex pronouncements as Davidson's and Bryant's, however. Jorgensen emphasizes Macbeth's despair and damnation and discusses Act V as a testament of atheism. His view and mine differ mainly in emphasis. He insists on our awareness of the quality of Macbeth's pain of loss and, implicitly at least, shares my view of Macbeth's perverse integrity.

retributive potential (V. vii. 13) and for his release from doubts about equivocal assurances. Gone is the virtù which informed his genial paltering with his intended victim Banquo, his persuasion of the hired assassins, and his prudent reticence about his plans with Lady Macbeth in the corresponding movement of the rising action. Our awareness of the emptiness of his self-reliance is intensified by the news of the defection of his confederates, the capture of his stronghold, and the certainty of his defeat (V. vii. 24-29). In the earlier unit he had striven desperately for security, calling on "seeling Night" to destroy that in Nature which is the root of his fear; now, free of fear, he is ready to withstand all mortal assaults and play the man he has chosen to be even till destruction sicken: "whiles I see lives, the gashes/Do better upon them" (ll. 2-3). Thus, the uncowardly man and the baited bear have a oneness for a brief moment.

The moment of Macbeth's scornful security is short-lived, and the truth which Macbeth seems to have vanquished in his fearlessness comes before him in the person of Macduff. And it is appropriate--revenge theme aside--that his antagonist should be Macduff: he was the voice of Nature following Duncan's death, the symbol of integrity in absenting himself from Macbeth's coronation, the figure of true loyalty in denying his person at the tyrant's great bidding and seeking to give obedience to Malcolm, and, finally, he has become the embodiment of "justice with valour arm'd."

It is as representative of the positive values of Macbeth's rejected self that Macduff now confronts the protagonist, whose choice of physical reality has reduced him to the status of player-king full of sound and fury, signifying very little. Macbeth's question, "Who can impress the forest?" (IV. i. 95) has already been given its answer: Malcolm. Birnam Wood has come to Dunsinane: the hewing of branches (IV. iv. 4-8), not the uprooting of trees (IV. i. 96)--an ironic reflection of Macbeth's hacking at but failure to uproot Nature--has endowed "come" with meanings that appal: "I pull in resolution; and begin/To doubt." But, Macbeth has evaded doubt and, desiring the destruction of both the worlds rather than unmake his uncompromising choice, he is confident that the "unreal" fear which haunted him is still a lie. As yet, he finds in the word "born" the assurance of the unambiguous. The death of young Siward seems to validate this assurance. But,then, when Macduff challenges the "Hell-hound" to turn and face his destiny, Macbeth's fearlessness gives way to fear--not to cowardice but to the "fear" which caused his better nature to recoil from the image of "Murther [that] yet [was] but fantastical" (I. iii. 139), from the idea of a deed that would outrage universal pity (I. vii. 24), from the vision of the dagger of guilt (II. i. 47), from the sight of Duncan's golden-bloodied corpse, and from the too-strange presence of Banquo's wonder-provoking ghost. That this is an encounter with the uncompromising truth of what he has suppressed in himself is suggested persuasively:

> Of all men else I have avoided thee:
> But get thee back, my soul is too much charg'd
> With Blood of thine already.
>
> (V. viii. 4-6)

It is guilt, not cowardice, that is in question here, as his later assertion of his "charmed life" indicates (ll. 8-13). Macbeth can experience the "fear" which shows the presence in him of Nature's bonds, while remaining free of that fear which he has never manifested yet, and cannot manifest while "born" remains univocal. The confession of guilt, in its honesty and in its intensity, provides so startling a recovery from the empty brashness of his "Roman fool" boastfulness that it redeems Macbeth in our eyes. He can confront and acknowledge truth, a truth which gives the lie to the manly self. But guilt acknowledged is not remorse, and the integrity of the committed will is still uncompromised.

As Macbeth and Macduff confront each other, we witness the encounter between the man of divided being and the man of unifed being: Macbeth, still valiant, with no cause to serve but that of his own perversely committed will, his univocal language unlinked with the complex fulness of truth, confronts Macduff, also valiant, but with a cause sanctioned by universal Pity, heaven's cherubins and the Powers that defend Nature's ideal order, who restores to language and soldiership their integrity and links them harmoniously. Macduff presents himself as the voice of valour's whole and wholesome truth; sword and word are one:

> I have no words;
> *My voice is in my sword*: thou bloodier villain
> Than terms can give thee out!
>
> (ll. 6-8; my emphasis)

These words are a declaration of the restoration of the ideal relationship between truth and word and between knowledge and act, a relationship essential to that wisdom which is demonstrated in the ethical activity of the champion of *humanitas*. The speaker of these words then proceeds to unmask the double sense in "born" (ll. 13-16) and to restore the full reality of Macbeth's banished "fear." Macbeth's response to this is a declaration of insight into the nothingness he has made his all, insight into the full meaning of equivocal ploys in language and in manhood:

> Accursed be that tongue that tells me so,
> For it hath cow'd my better part of man:
> And be these juggling fiends no more believ'd,
> That palter with us in a double sense;
> That keep the word of promise to our ear,
> And break it to our hope.--I'll not fight with thee.
>
> (ll. 17-22)

The emphasis on the problem of language--the cursing of the tongue that voices unwanted truth, the deploring of the rift between the language of truth and the language of desire, the acknowledgement of the futility of the univocal--is the primary emphasis here, but the foremost equivocator, Macbeth himself, is not repudiated. Quite the contrary! Adherence to the ethic expediency informs "accursed be the tongue." "My better part of man" refers not to the ethical self which characteristically recognized the ambiguity of words and the contrary realities to which a word such as "man" or "dare" could appeal. It refers to the self which dared do more than rightly becomes moral virility and which is now "cow'd" by the proof of the insufficiency of the limited language which buttressed it.

"I'll not fight with thee" is an acknowledgement of the futility of the valour of "my better part of man" and also an admission of linguistic defeat. Bestial ferocity is "cow'd"; the "Hyrcan tiger," "arm'd rhinoceros" and "rugged Russian bear" element is tamed. Yet the self of resolution still remains for Macbeth an irreplaceable absolute. Hence Macduff's taunt, "Yield thee, coward," and his promise to exhibit Macbeth as a caged monster excite the protagonist to his final empty act of defiance. For Macbeth, the word "monster" has echoes of the knowledge, once sacred to him, of all that may become a man and what makes man no more than beast. The word "coward" has echoes of the temptation to define himself as the brave man he became. It is in final defiance of the validity of "coward"--in the demonstration of final fidelity to his tragic choice--that Macbeth replies to Macduff's truth:

> Though Birnam wood be come to Dunsinane,
> And thou oppos'd, being of no woman born,
> Yet will I try the last.
>
> (ll. 30-33)

What follows is the rout of that physically defended by his warrior shield. That physicality, like the truth it represents, is too limited to prevail in a conflict in which his antagonist is an instrument of "the Powers above" and the representative of the single state of man in which blood (valour) and judgement (rightness of cause) are ideally commingled. Macbeth's vain trying the last is an appropriate gesture for the man who wrought "confusion's masterpiece": he dies defying the truth that once was his and meaninglessly asserting the truth whose sufficiency he had adopted and found wanting.

The final scene of _Macbeth_ constitutes an epilogue to the play. It is an epilogue that is as ambiguous as any scene that precedes it. The function of its ambiguity is to universalize the implications of the tragedy of Macbeth, extending the play's final statement beyond the limits of understanding that confine the _dramatis personae_ who comment on the story of the "dead butcher, and his fiend-like Queen" (V. ix. 35). To miss the ironies that inform this scene is to be limited to the Morality-play conclusions of those convinced that "the time is free" (1. 21).

The majority of critics have seen only the force of overt assertions about the freeing of life and time from the guile, hoodwinking and mockery (I. v. 62-65; I. vii. 82) of Macbeth's abuse. They see indeed that the reign of the new-hailed king begins a springtime of restitution and hope, with the new planting of temperance and justice,[26] and the assurance that (to quote Frye) "the whole rhythm of nature symbolized in the word 'measure,' which includes both the music of the spheres and the dispensing of human justice"[27] is restored. It is true that good has prevailed over, and makes restitution for, Macbeth's evil. It is true that, as Duthie shows us, the problem of equivocation is solved by Malcolm when, "in the closing moment of the drama, in the verbal pattern, the word 'grace' is unequivocally associated with itself and itself alone."[28] It is true that Macduff's view is a valid one when he sees Malcolm surrounded by his followers as an emblem of the crown itself "compass'd with [the] kingdom's pearl" and, thus, of the restoration of the precious in the land (l. 22). But this is not the whole truth, as some recent critics have begun to note.[29]

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[26] This is the normal tendency in the criticism of the 1950's and 1960's: see for example Goddard, The Meaning of Shakespeare, Holloway, The Story of the Night and Rossiter, Angel with Horns. It is true too of many discussions of Macbeth in the 1970's: for example Davidson's thorough discussion of the scene along these lines in The Primrose Way, pp. 81-90, and McAlindon's in Shakespeare and Decorum, pp. 164-66.

[27] Fools of Time (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967), p. 95

[28] "Antithesis in 'Macbeth'," Shakespeare Survey, 19 (1966), p. 32.

The whole view of the significance of the last scene must involve analysis of what underlies the discussion of young Siward's death and must recognize the ironies surrounding Macduff's bearing the head of Macbeth--this, for Sanders, is a grotesque and sickening image[30]--as he announces that the time is free and hails the Prince of Cumberland king. Sanders speaks of "the shadow of a vast evil" cast by the action of the play as a whole still "brood[ing] over our consciousness" because the killing of Macbeth "has the disturbing ambivalence of all acts of violence" and makes of Malcolm's affirmations about "loves," "friends," and "Grace" a definitely "muted counterpoint." Furthermore, he reminds us that the remark on the "dead butcher" must shock us into "a recognition of Macbeth's potential greatness--a greatness that can endure the solitude of the Nietzschean strong man (pp. 305-306). Mack, who makes much of the ironic distance separating us from the protagonist's nihilism and the antagonists' moralizing,[31] says that there is no need to sentimentalize Macbeth in order to perceive "what a handful of dust we are left with after he is gone." For Mack, "the new world is ordered, but bare; healthy but bland. Macbeth has made himself into a monster, but lived on a level to which no Malcolm or Macduff can attain" (p. 184). McElroy, who does not deal explicitly with the final scene, claims that the truth of Macbeth's final soliloquy makes that statement the only valid "pronouncement on life in the _Macbeth_-world," and that "nothing of comparable weight is there to counterbalance it."[32] Hence one may infer that the assertions made in the final scene are, for McElroy, an unpersuasive undermining of the "unimaginative vigour" and "ruthless integrity" of Macbeth in the "To-morrow" soliloquy, which enables us to see that "justice is little more than a tragic necessity" and that the victory of the forces of retribution is Pyrrhic, being retributive but not redemptive (p. 237). I do not intend to repeat Sanders' arguments about the primacy of evil in _Macbeth_, or to deal with the final ironies from Mack's standpoint. Instead, I wish to draw attention to Shakespeare's final treatment of the theme of virtus heroica as an element which supports in a somewhat qualified manner their assertions about the relative weakness of the triumphant powers of good. What I have to say supports in a qualified way too McElroy's statement about the comparable lightness of the arguments about life's signifying something. McElroy, I suggest, confuses pronouncements about life in the "Macbeth-world" with pronouncements about life in Macbeth's chosen, limited reality, for once mistaking the hero for the play. His argument is that the play's universe is a moral one. In it evil issues spontaneously and irrepressibly, but the basic law of that universe is that evil is evil and, as such, must be destroyed. This is no different from what is implied by Malcolm's celebration of the victory of Nature over under-nature, though it does insist, as Malcolm does not--and this is my point too--that the conflict is never ended.

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[29] See especially Sanders, The Dramatist and the Received Idea, pp. 305-307, Maynard Mack Jr., Killing the King, pp. 180-185, and McElroy, Shakespeare's Mature Tragedies, pp. 236-37.

[30] Received Idea, p. 305. Ribner calls it "a gruesome spectacle" (Patterns in Shakespearian Tragedy, p. 167), but he speaks of the feeling of reconciliation experienced by the audience, in contrast to Sanders' assertion that we experience a sense of evil's continued brooding over creation.

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[31] _Killing the King_, p. 185.

[32] _Shakespeare's Mature Tragedies_, pp. 236-37.

The suggestion that Macbeth's tragic error is not his alone lies in the dramatic handling of Young Siward's death and in the preparation for Macduff's role as victor. For old Siward as he accepts his son's destruction in the last scene, and for Malcolm as he guides Macduff's moral soldiership in the scene at the English court, the assumptions that make the soldier's irascibility virtue are morally buttressed by the knowledge of justice of cause.

Analyzed without reference to its well-established moral context, Malcolm's encouragement to Macduff, "Dispute it like a man" and "This tune goes manly" (IV. iii. 220, 235), can be seen to be dangerously similar in tenor to Lady Macbeth's advocacy of destructive manliness. Shakespeare de-emphasizes Malcolm's own Hamletian role as avenger of a murdered king-father in order to make him primarily the wise guide of Macduff's moral and martial energies and the symbol of moral authority. Yet, expressions such as "let grief/ Convert to anger; blunt not the heart, enrage it" (IV. iii. 229) are disturbing in their unrecognized implications. We know that Malcolm is rightly encouraging Macduff to convert his sorrow to righteous indignation, that he is advocating a virtuous combination of passion (anger) with right reason; but we must surely note, nonetheless, that the words in themselves are not distant from "for mine own good/All causes shall give way" (III. iv. 134-35). What justifies Malcolm is his conviction that he and Macduff and the other soldiers must use martial wrath to fulfil their function as instruments of the Powers above. In this immediate situation, soldierly irascibility and its spontaneous deeds are good because they are allied to goodness. But, while we can approve the conscious intention of Malcolm, we can also recognize how an attitude such as his has within it the potential for a confusion of absolute with relative good: in other circumstances, potentially at least, personal vindictiveness may usurp the place of that revenge which is justice. Macbeth has involved himself in such confusion. And his egoism led him oft to speak of various medicines needed to purge his Scotland of the evil which contradicts his good. Hence, there is a buried irony in "Let's make med'cines of our great revenge,/To cure this deadly grief [Macduff's personal loss]" (IV. iii. 214-15), which should alert us to the universality of Macbeth's tragic potential.

Siward, the best of Christian soldiers (IV. iii. 191-92), on learning that his son has "paid a soldier's debt" (V. ix. 5), is assured that the boy-become-man died "like a man" (l. 9). In this he finds total reassurance:

> Siward. Had he his hurts before?
> Rosse. Ay, on the front.
> Siward. Why then, God's soldier be he!
> Had I as many sons as I have hairs,
> I would not wish them to a fairer death.
>
> (ll. 12-15)

Old Siward is right: his son died as brave man and as God's soldier. We have witnessed that. Physical proof unambiguously mirrors metaphysical reality. But the logic of the old soldier's conclusion has recognizably within it the potential for unwarranted equation of the manly and the godly. The heroic will demonstrates its fascinating self-sufficiency, and that will unequivocally identifies the brave man's death as "fair." It is only by the "grace of Grace" that

Siward's "why then" leads to a true conclusion, and only by the harmony of Macduff's cause with Providence that the beheading of Macbeth is not horror. Soldierly virtue secure in its own rightness is moral virtue when it is an exercise of justice--that is, when courage and conscience give wholeness to manliness. It is only while that equilibrium is maintained that the time is truly free. Men like Siward and Macduff are evidence that the Macbeth error is an universal potential. The only certainty we are left with is that if, and when, men like these yield to "suggestion," they will never see clearly and feelingly what Macbeth has seen and felt.

CHAPTER VI

Conclusion

It was my purpose at the outset of this study to examine the dramatic and poetic significance of the theme of equivocation in Macbeth. This purpose was based on the idea that the play is primarily concerned not with ambition or murder or conscience but with something much more basic, language itself, and that the play's protagonist is shown principally to contend not with Lady Macbeth and Banquo and Macduff so much as with the significance of certain key words--words such as "man," "nothing," deed," "know," and "fear "--which have the status of chief *dramatis personae* in the primary tragic action, that is, the inner action, or what takes place in Macbeth's consciousness.

The bulk of Macbeth criticism does not adequately reflect the centrality of the play's concern with language--with what words mean, with how the individual interprets their significance, and with what such interpretation reveals about his view of reality and his ethical biases. Because of this, the significance of the theme of equivocation in the play has not been intensively explored. This study has aimed at filling this important gap. It has aimed, further, at illustrating that in the theme of equivocation we can discover a principle of dramatic unity, in terms of which the precise significance of such issues as ambition, murder, and conscience can be discovered and an understanding of the aesthetic purpose underlying hitherto puzzling details of the outer action arrived at.

I have shown in these pages that equivocation (which, on the one hand, means ambiguity and, on the other, the wilful suppression of aspects of ambiguity for purposes of deceit) is a key to Macbeth's encounter with the duality of things, especially with the inherent duality of his own heroic nature, and a key, too, to why and how he suppresses his moral nature before committing regicide. In doing so, I have demonstrated, by close analysis of principles of characterization, structure and diction informing the play's opening movement, the victory of heroic wilfulness over clear moral awareness that characterizes Macbeth's self-release from the Apollonian order of his past to the Dionysian chaos of his latter days, and I have shown that this victory, which, paradoxically, is the defeat of self-division, is analogous to the action of the equivocator who deceives himself. Such an approach to the play's first large movement led to the discovery of the purpose and function of the principle of triadic, or triptych, organization discoverable in individual scenic units and underlying the juxtaposition of these units. It led, furthermore, to the illustration of the psychomachic function of characters such as Lady Macbeth and Banquo and, thereby, to the recognition of the interrelationship between outer and inner dramatic action in the opening movement and in the play as a whole.

In the light of the equivocator's ploy of suppressing aspects of truth, which is reflected in Macbeth's ploy of suppressing his moral nature, and in the light of the psychomachic function of the *dramatis personae* with whom the protagonist interacts, this study has tried to clarify *Macbeth* criticism by revealing the care and consistency with which Shakespeare associates Duncan, Banquo and Macduff with what I have termed the humanistic principle of being that the hero rejects in releasing himself from the values of his ordered past. In the careful establishment of these figures as symbols of a principle rejected by Macbeth there is established a principle of necessity that determines his choice of Banquo and his issue and of Macduff and his family as objects to be annihilated. In destroying them he is endeavouring to dismiss as nothing the humanistic world view and humane values suppressed in himself and represented by them. What is more, the discussion of the primacy of the theme of equivocation enables us to see that the efforts of Macbeth to annihilate the Duncan, Banquo and Macduff lines is consistently interrelated with his determination to deny the validity of interpreting the words "man," "know," and "fear" with reference to transcendent reality and to an absolutistic ethical system which are antithetical to the immanent reality and the ethic of relativistic egoism which he has chosen as his sufficiency. Macbeth, as equivocator, must interpret reality in terms of the palpable only, and must insist that words be univocal so as to reflect that reality. But though his determination in this epistemological and linguistic struggle is as thorough and impressive as was his determination in the accustomed struggles of military conflict, in the war of words and worlds his heroic will cannot unequivocally prevail. Transcendent truth and values manifest their pertinence to the wholeness of human experience and resist his efforts to deny their relevance to his chosen way of life. "Man" has more complex significance than he allows the word: the voices that haunt him following Duncan's death attest to that. The word "know" resists its restriction to a Baconian concentration on the reality of fact: Banquo's ghost asserts that with mute eloquence. "Fear" cannot be held as merely synonymous with cowardice; it also means guilt, even if guilt is irrelevant to the world picture and ethics of the pragmatist; Macduff's disconcerting lesson on the meaning of "born" proves the inescapability of this truth. Therefore, however much Macbeth consciously attributes his destruction of Duncan to desire for kingship, his murder of

Banquo to desire for dynasty, and his attack on the Macduff household as punishment for disloyalty, it is clear that, unconsciously at least, he is fighting a war of words and asserting his desire for the sufficiency of the world view to which he is committed.

One of the factors in Macbeth that has been the subject of a variety of contradictory interpretations in the history of criticism is the nature and value of the protagonist's imagination. The examination of the function of this faculty in terms of the psychology of equivocation has made possible a discussion of the relation of Macbeth's poetic insight to noumenal reality and to the moral values associated with the humanistic ideal. This has made possible an explication of the single dramatic design which informs Macbeth's fear and awe as he encounters the idea of regicide on the heath, as he perceives the insubstantial bloody dagger before the murder of Duncan, and as he recoils from the horrifying ghost of Banquo. The demonstration of this design answers those critics who have seen Macbeth as victim of disordered fantasy, and shows the incompatibility of their interpretations with the play's unifying principle. It supports the assertions of critics who have seen Macbeth's imagination as the best part of him. The contribution to the understanding of Macbeth's imagination and its function in the play's design is, therefore, not new in itself, but the marshalling of internal and external evidence to prove the validity of a positive view of the faculty is new--for example, the evaluation of Lady Macbeth's view of fantasy (and its implicit theory of art) and the appeal to theories of imagination (and art) advanced by Renaissance apologists for poetry.

The discussion of Macbeth from the focal point of the equivocation theme has led to an interpretation of the last scene of Act V, the play's dramatic epilogue, that emphasizes the subtle ironies unrecognized by Scotland's restorers--and recognized by few critics until recently. These ironies suggest that the restoration of the Apollonian principle--martial virtue is restored to its alliance with Justice and Loyalty, and language is restored to its ideal alliance with Truth--has within it the potential for a Dionysian release. We are forced to recognize what they too obviously ignore: first of all, that these virtuous victorious soldiers who have restored order--and who embody that order--reflect in their steadfastness, in their very fortitude, the fearless fortitude of Macbeth, the intrepid, pious defender of Duncan's realm; secondly, that their fortitude could maintain its heroic constancy, should occasion suggest its divorce from the order which graces it. The heroic factor, the daring to be true to oneself in circumstances however adverse, remains heroic, admirable, and frightening too, whether sanctioned by concepts of the good that transcend individual impulse, desire and will or harnessed to a summum bonum that is the construct of impelling egoism. They too have within them the tragic potential that Macbeth made a reality. But if ever, or whenever, they dedicate themselves to the vindication of their sense of fortitude or self-sufficiency as a thing sufficient in itself and independent of a cosmic and political order that makes it virtuous, their stories may be merely pathetic or melodramatic, not tragic; it is only men with the imaginative gift that makes Macbeth so fascinating, and with the willingness to articulate the quality of that suffering born of the loneliness of the metaphysical anarch, that make us witness with awe the sound and fury of a life that is "nothing" and allow us to detect with ironic detachment the myopia of the pious restorers of meaningful life.

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