Chapter V

MACBETH

(MACBETH, BANquo AND THE WITCHES)
Perhaps it is because of the all pervasive evil in the play, from the very beginning till the end, that Knight calls Macbeth, “the most profound and mature vision of evil”\(^1\) and Knights considers it “a statement of evil.”\(^2\) Whether it is the preternatural powers or some sort of political and moral discord or civil war, all these suggest the all-pervasive evil and some sort of violation of order due to some evil and irrational acts. Besides this, evil is suggested in blood images, which are scattered throughout the play. In a way, it can be said that the play from the very beginning till the end, charts the course of ever increasing evil in the Scottish Commonwealth.

On the one hand the witches who are “close contriver of all harms” are trying to dissolve the divine order of the created universe: on the other hand the war of elements, which is suggested in the opening “thunder and lightening”, suggests the impending reversal of order. Whereas, the civil war and the political and moral discord due to revolt and treachery of Macdonwald and Cawdor respectively, have already threatened the divine order of the Scottish body politic. According to Bernard Mc Elroy, the principal function of the witches in the drama is “to embody a supernatural order which desires suffering and evil, does what it can to promote them and finally exults in the destruction that follows.”\(^3\) Hence, the Scottish order has already been possessed by the evil forces much before the grave violation of the divine order by the unnatural and unreasonable acts of Macbeth.

Nonetheless, these are just initial ‘breaches’ and despite some sort of cosmic and social discord, order and consequent harmony prevails in
the Scottish kingdom due to wise and just government of “the most sainted king” Duncan. As a matter of fact Duncan, through his wise and just rule, aptly reflects the divine order on the earth, of which he is the sole beholder. Bernard Elroy in his discourse on divine justice, in *Macbeth* world, writes thus: “Perhaps the most extraordinary thing about the *Macbeth*-world is that it contains a strong, effective principle of retributive justice in operation throughout the play.”

Unlike King Lear, he is affectionate to his subjects and rewards and punishes everyone accordingly. The following speech foregrounds his above mentioned virtue:

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No more that Thane of Cawdor shall deceive
Our bosom interest. –Go pronounce his present death,
And with his former title greet Macbeth.
(I.ii, 65-67)
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Duncan is an epitome of nobility and virtues and feels unduly courteous and humble even at what Macbeth, as a soldier, is expected to do in the service of his master. This humility comes forth in the following lines:

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would thou hadst less deserv’d,
That the proportion both of thanks and payment
Might have been mine! only I have left to say,
More is thy due than more than all can pay.
(I.iv, 18-21)
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Hence irrespective of these initial ‘breaches’ in the Scottish order, peace and harmony prevail due to Duncan’s just rule. Initially Duncan, Malcolm, Macbeth and Banquo, all these contribute in the maintenance of divine order by performing their prescribed duties. Nevertheless this peace and harmony is blown to air when the protagonist ceases to owe the “service and loyalty” which he should owe to his master Duncan and
moves "from crime to crime" like Claudius "in the attempt to achieve security." He violates "the master-servant relationship" which "was the bedrock of Elizabethan-Jacobean society because each party was expected to perform his role in harmony with nature’s rule of order and degree." By materializing his "cursed thoughts", he not only defies his degree and ‘nature’s rule’ he also transgresses Nature’s ‘civil law’ and usurps the cosmic harmony. His sin is no ordinary sin, rather a sin against the highest degree in the hierarchy of rational souls. Hence impact of this violation is immediately felt at all the three orders e.g. cosmic, social and animal order. Commenting on the wide-ranging chaos in Macbeth, Ribner writes: “The tragedy is cast simultaneously on the planes of man, the state, the family and the physical universe; each is thrown into chaos by the sin of Macbeth, and evil is allowed to work itself out on each of these corresponding planes”. If Macbeth’s sin is analyzed according to the theological beliefs of the age, the consequences are grave but not unnatural. Macbeth’s sin is against a king who according to the Elizabethan beliefs was the highest authority in any commonwealth and was also the upholder of divine law on earth. The worse is the sin the grave will be the consequences. He, in his irrationality, disturbs the “sanity and health” of his region as well as of other spheres. The moment he overlaps all the socio-ethical taboos to materialize his “vaulting ambition” despite having guilty thoughts and knowledge of his sin, he is no better than Macdonwald: a traitor. “In an age when rebellion even against manifest tyrants was condemned by the king”, Macbeth’s sin is against a noble and just ruler. Despite his knowledge from the very beginning, that the deed he contemplates is
evil, he willingly yields to the temptation within and diverges from his prescribed duties. It is definitely tragic to see a man of 'potential goodness' degenerating his rational self into bestial one. The cause behind his tragic fall is his imperfect understanding and corrupt will. Owing to this willing divergence from divine 'Reason' he is no more a part of the divine order, which in the Elizabethan age was the very basis of survival.

Hence, Macbeth can be aptly called a 'tragedy of ambition' because he fails to control his 'thriftless ambition', which coincides with his corrupt will and seals his doom. He deliberately ignores what the majority of the Elizabethans knew: “one of the two great passions that led men into temptation, that made them fit subjects for the devil’s work was ambition.” According to Walter Raleigh “ambition which begetteth every vice… looketh only to the ends by itself set down.... It was the first sin that the world had and began in Angels, for which they were cast into hell without hope of redemption.” Commenting on the protagonist, Kenneth Muir writes, “Macbeth’s first crime is inspired by ambition and carried through by his wife’s determinism; the remainder from the murder of the grooms to the slaughter of Macduff’s family and the reign of terror of which this is an example, are inspired by fear, fear born of guilt”.

He transgresses Nature’s law as a soldier, as a host as well as a king. Like Lear, he fails as a king too because he fails to provide an affectionate reign rather, his reign is one of terror. He comes short of his duties as a subject as well as a king.
As far as the origin and nature of his ambition is concerned, whether it is his own, or given to him by the witches or imposed upon by Lady Macbeth, Macbeth alone is responsible for his evil deed and thereafter for his tragic fall. According to the Elizabethan belief man could resist the temptation despite his corrupt wit or will that Macbeth fail to resist. In the words of Bernard Mc Elroy, “In Macbeth, Shakespeare focuses his attention fully upon a problem he had dealt with peripherally in Hamlet and Measure for Measure: that of the criminal who is deeply aware of his own criminality, is repulsed by it, but is driven by internal and external pressures ever further into crime.”

Hence Macbeth “unguarded” by proper or absolute will, gives way to temptation irrespective of the controversy whether the desire is given by the witches or his own. Commenting on Macbeth, Curry writes: “the good diminishes, his liberty of free choice is determined more and more by evil inclination and … he can not choose the better course”.

Unlike Banquo, the foil character, Macbeth fails to keep his “bosom franchies’d and allegiance clear” and from “brave Macbeth” turns into a “dead butcher”. Ironically a man, despite his consciousness of his sin, keeps on moving from ‘one crime to another crime’. Undoubtedly, Macbeth’s sins as a soldier, as a subject and as a king are too gross to be redeemed.

Act I, scene i, besides having immediate significance, suggests the all pervasive evil in the form of preternatural powers, and gives a microscopic view of all that is about to happen at cosmic level.
According to L.C. Knights, the speeches by the witches suggest “the kind of pitch and toss which is about to be played with good and evil” and upcoming ‘reversal of values’. Besides this the last speech “Fair is foul and foul is fair” by the witches “is the first, statement of one of the main themes of the play.” The first ten lines of the play churn out all that the play takes up at wider level e.g. sedition, battle (external as well as internal), evil, confusion, discord and reversal of values in the sublunary region. Macbeth’s unnatural act disturbs the harmonious pattern of the divine order and spreads all sorts of confusion.

Stimulated by the prophecy and spurred on by Lady Macbeth, he murders Duncan, commits “the most sacrilegious Murther”, and takes away the life from “The Lord’s anointed Temple”. It seems that the evil powers which “tend on mortal thoughts” have perceived Macbeth’s “black and deep desires” and have decided to provoke him further, through equivocation, towards his destruction. Bernard Mc Elroy’s opinion regarding the witches is apt enough: “They do not cause Macbeth’s fall: they do not even contribute much to it; rather their most characteristic function is to exacerbate it, to revel in it, and profanely celebrate it.” He fails to learn what Banquo has already learnt e.g. the truth of the witches:

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\begin{align*}
\text{to win us to our harm,} \\
\text{The instruments of Darkness tell us truths;} \\
\text{Win us with honest trifles, to betray’s} \\
\text{In deepest consequence.}
\end{align*}
\]

(I. iii, 123-126)

This is not to say that Banquo is without evil thoughts, but that his wit is too strong to give way to passions.
Macbeth’s initial projection is one of a brave soldier who is fighting against all sorts of odds. He is very much in accordance with the divine law by performing the prescribed duties of a soldier to his master. He is a part of the order and is contributing to its harmony. The detailed account of the battle by the injured captain and later on by Rosse immediately establishes his soldiership. Despite fighting amidst all sorts of uncertainties and against mighty opponents, Macbeth and Banquo return victoriously from the battlefield. Though his opponents have all sorts of supplies of army and help of other lords yet every mighty opponent is “too weak/For brave Macbeth” and he can easily “disdain Fortune” only because he is fighting for the just cause. Rosse reports the mighty opposition and Macbeth’s courage to stand up all the odds despite his reeking wounds to Duncan thus:

Norway himself,

With terrible numbers,
Assisted by that most disloyal traitor,
The Thane of Cawdor began a dismal conflict;
Till the Bellona’s bridegroom, lapp’d in proof,
Confronted him with self-comparisons,
Point against point, rebellious arm’ gainst arm,
(I.ii, 51-57)

Nonetheless this “worthy gentleman” is not without ‘guilty thoughts’ and these hidden thoughts are brought forth in scene iii immediately after the prophecies of the witches. Hence, critics interpret his start and fear ‘as a sign of guilty thoughts’. Macbeth’s asides are significant enough because these simultaneously reveal his desire as well as his guilty thoughts because of the consciousness of the evil deed which his desire involves:
His disturbed ‘physical countenance’ in itself is symbolic of his moral awareness to a great extent. Commenting on the asides, K. Muir writes, “Macbeth’s asides depict the terror of his soul.” Nonetheless, the prophetic speeches by the witches and the immediate fulfillment of one of them which is reported by Rosse thus: “And for an earnest of a greater honour / He bade me, from him, call thee Thane of Cawdor” (I. iii, 104-05) has truly enkindled his “spirit” and motivates him to look forward:

[Aside.] Two truths are told,
As happy prologues to the swelling act
Of the imperial theme.
(I.iii, 128-129)

Commenting on his aside immediately after the prophecies Knight writes: “This is the moment of the birth of evil in Macbeth – he may indeed have ambitious thoughts before, may even have intended the murder but now for the first time he feels it’s oncoming reality.”

Ironically, despite his realization that his “cursed thoughts” which can bring physical discord in his own personality will disturb the sublime pattern of the divine order from its very roots, that by violating his ‘degree’, he is not only violating his own order but disturbing so many other things, he moves ahead. He ignores the voice of conscience, fails to stop himself and a “valiant cousin” turns ultimately into a “dead butcher”.

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By the time, he learns the truth of ‘the Weird Sisters’; it is too late to retreat. Brave Macbeth by that time has lost everything, which is to quote in his own words:

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my way of life
Is fall’n into the sere, the yellow leaf;
And that which should accompany old age,
As honour, love, obedience, troops of friends,
I must not look to have;"
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(V. iii, 22-26)

Irrespective of the spells and crafts laid upon his corrupt soul by the witches, it is his own personal weakness which yields to all sorts of provocations, because it was very much believed in the Elizabethan age that “man has it in him to survive the blows of fortune and that ultimately fortune herself is, like nature, the tool of God.”^19 Elizabethan age “fought the superstition that man was the slave as well as the victim of chance.”^20 According to Bernard, “he is not really persuaded; rather as at several other junctures in the play, he willfully disregards his better judgment, pushing to the back of his mind all his best perceptions and most passionately held beliefs, and substitutes in their place the shallow faulty rationalizations.”^21 Hence if Macbeth can disdain Fortune while waging a war against Macdonwald, he could have resisted the temptation within his personality.

Macbeth’s tragic end has already been foreshadowed in the execution of the “most disloyal traitor” Cawdor. If Cawdor can be overthrown for his sin, Macbeth is no exception especially when he too has turned into a traitor like Cawdor, whose title he now owns. According to Roy Walker, the words of Rosse on Cawdor “actually
foreshadow also the faults, the “treasons capital” that will “overthrow” the new thane of Cawdor.”

Macbeth’s “black and deep desires” are explicitly brought forth in Act I scene iv. Nevertheless Macbeth is still a part of the order because in speeches and in deeds he is still contributing to the harmonious order. He has successfully curbed the treason and has returned victoriously and is full of respect and humility in words though his thoughts have gone slightly against the natural order:

The service and the loyalty I owe,
In doing it, pays itself. Your Highness’ part
Is to receive our duties: and our duties
Are to your throne and state, children and servants;
(I.iv, 22-25)

Though his actions and his words converge with the divine ‘Reason’, yet his thoughts follow his own reason. Commenting on Act I scene iv, Knights writes: “This scene suggests the natural order which is shortly to be violated. It stresses natural relationships… honorable bonds and the political order”.

His evil thoughts are but the precursor of the evil deed, which he is going to commit shortly. So he says, when Duncan announces Malcolm his next successor that in a way immediately mars Macbeth’s raised expectations:

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, 50-53)
Macbeth’s imagination on the one hand foregrounds his desire for the “golden round” and on the other hand gives insight into his ‘guilty conscience’. According to Bernard, “his imagination is the violent instrument by which his intellect attempts to make it heard over the all but indomitable voice of his will.”\textsuperscript{24} Initially the divine order is violated only in thoughts and not in actions. That is why Bradley assumes that Macbeth’s imagination refers to his better nature. And it is perhaps because of this prick of conscience that Macbeth keeps on postponing the act itself despite having “vaulting ambition”, so says Kenneth Muir: “Macbeth’s conscience prevents him from achieving the crown by foul means”.\textsuperscript{25} According to Kenneth Muir: “Macbeth has not a predisposition to murder; he has merely an inordinate ambition that makes murder itself seem to be a lesser evil than failure to achieve the crown and so satisfy his wife.”\textsuperscript{26} Muir is apt enough because he but only echoes what Lady Macbeth says about her husband:

\begin{quote}
Yet do I fear thy nature:
It is too full o’ th’ milk of human kindness,
To catch the nearest way. Thou wouldst be great;
Art not without ambition, but without
The illness should attend it:
(I.v, 16-20)
\end{quote}

This speech by Lady Macbeth throws ‘new and useful light’ on ‘brave Macbeth’. Another aspect of his personality comes to us. According to critics, these lines by Lady Macbeth suggest some sort of spiritual struggle within Macbeth.

Lady Macbeth’s presence intensifies the atmosphere of terror because she too joins the evil forces. She, in contrast to Macbeth is more
resolute and hardly ever yields to the voices of conscience. She provokes Macbeth to act. In a way, she too diverges from the prescribed order by unnaturally associating himself with the evil forces.

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!

(I.v, 40-43)

The way she unsexes herself, loses her feminine qualities and invokes the evil spirits to fill her with "direst cruelty", all this is unnatural, against the creative pattern of 'Nature'. Her nature turns destructive and she too willingly diverges from divine 'Reason'. Instead of preventing Macbeth from diverging from his duties, she motivates him, provokes him, and chides him to secure "the golden round". Her every word gravely violates the 'degree' to which she belongs. The invocation of the "murth'ring ministers", or unsexing herself, her words and her acts, everything is unnatural, a violation of her degree. Though her moral qualms are not as absolute as that of Macbeth nevertheless she too is aware of the immorality, which her act involves.

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!

(I.v, 44-47)

Lady Macbeth, hence, is no better than the witches, who inspire Macbeth to do all that is unnatural. She and Macbeth, both deliberately suppress their scruples, only for the sake of material good. For the
earthly good, and power they consciously or unconsciously lose whatever is divine and celestial in them.

Lady Macbeth’s resolution to “chastise” Macbeth “with the valour of tongue” is directly in opposition to Macbeth’s indeterminism. Truly the “murth’ ring ministers” has turned her into one of the evil spirits. For the sake of “sovereign sway and masterdom” she willingly rejects all that is natural and imbibes all that is unnatural. “In the world of Macbeth, the inverted and the unnatural constitute the normal state of affairs. Paradox, antithesis and equivocation are the characteristic idiom of the play”. 27 In a way she is responsible to a great extent for Macbeth’s tragic fall. Macbeth’s disturbed physical countenance as well as Lady Macbeth’s evaluation of his personality suggests some sort of fear in Macbeth. According to Kittredge: “when a person shows a disturbed countenance, it is always inferred he has something on his mind.”28 The following words by Lady Macbeth bring forth his fears:

Your face, my Thane, is as a book, where men
May read strange matters. To beguile the time,
Look like the time;

(I.v, 62-64)

As long as Macbeth and Lady Macbeth has “cursed thoughts”, they do not gravely threaten the divine universe and its order but the moment these “cursed thoughts” are materialized into wicked deeds, they not only reverse the values: they reverse the order as well. Hence the calm and peaceful atmosphere of Inverness immediately converts into a hellish one the moment these thoughts of its inhabitant’s are converted into the deed. This conversion is shown in the Porter scene where the
porter is symbolic of the porter of hell. If Duncan is genuinely a kind king: Lady Macbeth pretends to be most humble and courteous lady. The reversal of values, which is one of the main themes of the play, has set in the very moment Lady Macbeth decides to disguise her evil self behind the guise of courteous and humble lady. Her disguise is too thick to show or reveal her true self. Whereas Macbeth has yet to learn this art. He is not even for a single moment without moral qualms. It is true that goaded on by Lady Macbeth he determines to act but the opposition in his mind between desire and action is symbolic of the internal struggle between good and evil. His discourse on the consequences, his knowledge of his sin as a “kinsman and his subject” and of cosmic participation at such a terrific deed, all this project his moral consciousness. “This deep fear of heaven’s justice, of the unknown decrees of justice, of retribution in the now as well as hereafter is but the prologue to Macbeth’s argument; on the one side are Duncan’s claims as king and kinsman and guest, Duncan’s virtues and above all pity, while on the other there is only “vaulting ambition” as the spur to his “intent” out of which he ultimately choses his vaulting ambition.”29 He is truly afraid of some sort of “judgment” and this is suggestive of divine judgment, divine justice when interpreted in the light of Elizabethan theology. As a matter of fact, Macbeth is ready to act if he would have been sure that “this blow/Might be the be all and the end all.” Macbeth’s soliloquy in the last scene is very significant because it clearly projects the “moral cowardness” of “brave Macbeth” and his moral consciousness. His hesitation silently projects all that impedes him from the “golden-round”. His knowledge of the “even
handed justice”, of his sin as a subject and kinsman, of Duncan’s virtuous nature, of the cosmic consequences, all these show that his wit, his understanding is perfect to a great extent but that his ambitions, goaded further by his wife and inspired by the witches, has corrupt his will:

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, 25-28)

He is aware of the cosmic consequences:

that his virtues
Will plead like angels, trumpet-tongu’d, against
The deep damnation of his taking-off;
(I. vii, 18-20)

The participation of heavenly Cherubim’s, the war of elements “that tear shall drawn the wind”, the knowledge of “this even-handed Justice”, this all express his knowledge of what his act will result into. He is not physical coward but morally he is. When interpreted in the context of the Elizabethan theology Macbeth is not afraid “to be the same in act and valour” as he has strong desires, but his morality prevents him to move ahead. For some critics Macbeth, in his soliloquy, considers the practical consequences only but when interpreted according to the doctrine of Correspondences this practical consideration involves great knowledge of morals and of violation of Order at cosmic level that is suggested in the participation of Cherubs and of war of elements.

Ultimately, Macbeth’s regicide reverses this order. “Macbeth’s deed is against the supernatural grace which is set besides supernatural evil.”

The consequences are immediate, he reverses the order at all
levels e.g. all the three orders reverberate his crime. His disproportionate act has disturbed the divine proportion of the universe. Whether it is to fulfill his “vaulting ambition”, to prove his manliness or to prove his love to Lady Macbeth, he crosses his limits, disturbs the creative pattern of Nature. “The wheel of temptation, choice and judgment has come full circle for the first time after Duncan’s murder”.\textsuperscript{31} The immediate consequences are cosmic as well as personal:

\begin{center}
\begin{quote}
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;
\end{quote}
\end{center}

(II. i,49-52)

Devil spirits, due to this reversed order, have the opportunity to celebrate because Macbeth has destroyed whatever is good in society. The aim of evil has been accomplished, ironically, by God’s unique creation. His unnatural deed has associated him completely to the darker side of his nature. His desire to hide again reflects his knowledge of his sin:

\begin{center}
\begin{quote}
Thou sure and firm-set earth,
Hear not my steps, which way they walk, for fear
Thy very stones prate of my where-about,
\end{quote}
\end{center}

(II.i, 56-58)

“He his hysteria after the crime reflects not merely fear of real and imagined horrors; the purport of all his speeches after the murder is a sense of incalculable loss, panic stricken realization of his estrangement from all that had formerly constituted his life.”\textsuperscript{32}

If Macbeth can feel “the heat of deeds” it is because of his moral awareness of his sin. His sin is too great to be washed by “Neptune’s
ocean”. That’s why Macbeth prefers to remain “self-alienated than to be fully conscious of the nature of his deed.” According to Roy Walker: “Macbeth might be regarded as a traitor to his kinsman Duncan, to his country Scotland, to his friend Banquo, to his guest, lord and benefactor Duncan.” Macbeth’s castle has turned into the “mouth of hell through which evil spirits emerge in this darkness to cause upheavals in nature.” Duncan’s murder is as worst as “the great doom’s image” itself because a king is the reflection of the divine order on the earth, the ‘primum mobile’ of earthly activities. Macbeth has “outran the pauser, reason” and his corrupt will coincides with the passions in him. Hence what remains is but chaos. Chaos at all the three orders is but consequential when the ‘degree’ has been violated. The cosmic chaos is suggested in the war of the elements and in thunder and storm. The cosmic chaos is reported by Lenox:

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,
(II. iii,53-55)

Curry says: “the storm which rages over Macbeth’s castle ... is no ordinary tempest caused by the regular movement of heavenly bodies, but rather a manifestation of demonic power over the elements of nature.” Curry further says, “the firm-set earth is so sensitized by the all pervading demonic energy that it is feverous and shakes.” Besides this social discord too has taken place due to the reversal of values and it is suggested in the “fear and scruples” of the Scottish. This discord is apparent even in the animal order reported by the old Man:

A falcon, towering in her pride of place,
Was by a mousing owl hawk’d at, and kill’d.
(II. iv, 12-13)

The reversal of values in the commonwealth is followed by the reversal in the cosmic and the animal order. Act. II scene iv underlines the unnaturalness of Duncan’s murder, it reports the success of Macbeth’s schemes. According to Kenneth Muir: the reversal of animal order by the owl and the horses is “a reflection of the violation of the natural order which the murder involves.” Macbeth’s world is “a world shaken by “fears and scruples”. It is a world where “nothing is but what is not”, where “fair is foul and foul is fair.”

Besides this reversal of order in all the three orders e.g. cosmic, social and animal, Macbeth’s personality too has undergone drastic and significant changes. “Passions have wrought havoc in him. He is the victim of dreams, he keeps alone, he envies the dead, and his thoughts are of black night.” He is haunted by Banquo’s ghost as well as by terrible dreams. After the unnatural murder what remains to follow is the moral, political and social discord in the Scottish commonwealth and Macbeth’s movement from ‘one crime to other’. Rest of the play is concerned with the deterioration and steady progress to downfall of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. “For the final three acts as he rises higher in worldly power like Richard III he sinks deeper into evil, until at the end he is utterly destroyed.” Despite the prick of conscience, Macbeth has started living a life of his reason like that of a modern man, which in every way diverges from divine ‘Reason’ and hence suffers from mental as well as physical agony. The Thane of Cawdor and now a king, Macbeth is unable to sleep despite having “the sovereign power and
masterdom”. Ironically, Macbeth never enjoys all that for which he yields “his better part of man”. His feeling of guilt would make him fear Banquo and afraid of his “royalty of nature” and the “dauntless temper of his mind” and partly to defeat the prophecy of the witches regarding Banquo, he sweeps him out of his way and all those who come in his way:

No son of mine succeeding. If’t be so,
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,
(III. i,63-68)

He is ready to fight against fate itself, if it places a “fruitless crown” on his head. He is willing to wage a war against his destiny. What else, ironically, could be worst than this level of corruption? Hecate aptly calls him “a wayward son”. He has turned into an independent man who instead of following the prophecies by the witches, have decided to act on his own, in both cases symbolic of corrupt reason. In his desire to secure his “sovereign sway” for in the words of Hecate “security/Is mortals chiefest enemy” he is ready to make Scottish Commonwealth barren, despite his constant realization of the horror of the deed. “Like Satan, Macbeth is aware from the first of the evil he embraces, and like Satan he will not renounce his free-willed moral choice once it has been made.”

His fears and his actions thereafter seal his deep-damnation. Nonetheless, his desires to secure the “golden round” forever, he but increases his sufferings and to get rid of these sufferings, he steeps
himself further into crimes against Nature. "The constant lying to himself, and the discrepancy between his beliefs and the world that he has chosen for himself, produce the self-loathing and numbing sense of loss that are the essence of his tragedy." He has his purgatory in his sufferings. His realization of what his own life has been reduced to, what he has lost, unconsciously reminds him of his sin. A man who usurps the life of Duncan, for him life is:

Life's but a walking shadow; a poor player,
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more:

(V.v,24-26)

Macbeth fails to learn anything from his sufferings. He can see what he has lost e.g. his wife, honour and his friends but he cannot learn. He can realize what his life has come to, he can see the shortness of his life but his corrupt desires prevent him from learning anything. He can see the futility of his attempts and acts that he thinks will be his last act:

To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,
To the last syllable of recorded time;
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death.

(V.v,19-23)

These lines "express in Shakespeare's terms the hopelessness of a hardened sinner, to whom the universe has now no meaning." He realizes the meaninglessness of the universe out of his sufferings. Lady Macbeth's death comes to him as the final shock to his desires, his raised expectations. For, according to critics, it is mainly out of his love to Lady Macbeth that he keeps on steeping his self into more and more
crime, to secure that wealth and power for ever of which both of them have dreamt together. But the news of her death forces him to realize perhaps instinctively the futility of life.

Nonetheless, his reason is still corrupt. Macbeth is not only equivocating to others, he is equivocating to himself as well. He still thinks that seeming is ‘being’. “He is plunging deeper and deeper into unreality, the severance from mankind and all normal forms of life is now abysmal, deep.” He can, see the increasing revolt against his authority but justifies his deeds as if he is fighting for the right cause. He still thinks himself a fine soldier who should fight instead of yielding. Hence, he is ready to take up every challenge:

Ring the alarum bell! – Blow, wind! come, wrack!
At least we’ll die with harness on our back.
(V.v, 51-52)

He may justify all his deeds like a soldier, but he still has to learn that he is not the one who fights to preserve the harmony and order, rather one who is destroying his own people. He still has to learn the futility of his justification. He has made his land a graveyard where in the words of Rosse:

violent sorrow seems
A modern ecstasy: the dead man’s knell
Is there scarce ask’d for who; and good men’s lives
Expire before the flowers in their caps.
(IV. iii,169-172)

“Darkness at noon, predatory animals, night’s black agents, murdering ministers, crying orphans, weeping widows, and innumerable other large and small touches all combine to delineate a
macrocosm which, like the microcosm of the hero, has suffered the
death of nature.\footnote{Nevertheless, despite its neutrality, divine justice
asserts itself and restores the social, political and moral harmony which
has been destroyed by his continuous involvement in crimes. The
revenge taken upon him by the violated order is no ordinary one. Owing
to his continuous involvement in crimes one after the other and
continuous violation of Nature’s Law, this or that way, all the three
orders cumulatively revenge upon him. The cosmic world, the social
world and the vegetative world all have stood up against Macbeth. The
cosmic world has forwarded aid in the form of King Edward’s support,
who reflects the divine order on earth. Heavens are not silent observers;
rather they are participating explicitly in the form of King Edward. So
informs Malcolm:

\begin{verbatim}
Be’t their comfort,
We are coming thither. Gracious England hath
Lent us good Siward, and ten thousand men;
(IV.iii, 188-190)
\end{verbatim}

His own social world, the Lords, Thanes have stood up against him.
They are no more loyal to him

\begin{verbatim}
Meet we the med’cine of the sickly weal;
And with him pour we, in our country’s purge,
Each drop of us.
(V.ii, 27-28)
\end{verbatim}

The revolt, against his authority, in the vegetative world, comes forth in
the coming of “Birnam wood to Dunsinane”. All Macbeth’s fortification
is but in vain in front of the punishment taken upon him by all the three
orders simultaneously:
The cosmic world in the form of the Holy King and the animal/vegetative world symbolic in Birnam wood have come to aid the “industrious soldiership” of Macduff and Malcolm. Their “industrious soldiership” for the just cause is directly in contrast to Macbeth’s “wayward” soldiership, which Macbeth does not realize.

Nevertheless, Macbeth has started suspecting the ‘seeming’ and has started looking for the ‘being’. Macbeth’s following speech expresses the initial spark of his improved wit, which will redeem him ultimately:

I pull in resolution; and begin
To doubt th’ equivocation of the fiend,
That lies like truth: ‘Fear not, till Birnam wood
Do come to Dunsinane’; —and now a wood
Comes toward Dunsinane.
(V.v, 42-46)

Despite these initial sparks, he justifies his deeds like a soldier. But the truth is that his fall is sure and complete because he has unnaturally violated the divine order. He may have purgation in his sufferings, in his tragic ordeal but his sins are too wide and deep, to be easily forgiven. “Macbeth should be a damned soul like Dr. Faustus because he willingly aligns himself with the evil powers. Undoubtedly he has cut himself off from the world he believes in and has committed himself to its antithesis, a world in which man is a predatory animal.” Critics unanimously voice against his redemption. According to Ribner, he willingly embraces damnation, the way of redemption is closed to
him, and he must end in destruction and despair.”

Whereas, according to L.B. Campbell, “Macbeth’s final ground for hope is taken away.” According to S.L. Belhell, “Macbeth’s last stand, however, is no atonement for his sins: it is not manly but “bear-like” (V, vii, 2), beast like.” He further writes: “According to The Governor, this is not fortitude but desperation; it has no moral value, for those who “hedlonge will fall in to daungers, from whence there is no hope to escape. So Macbeth, though we may pity him, presumably goes to hell.”

“Macbeth’s falling, less conventionally than Faustus, is more surely dammed, so that after this speech not Christ himself, could pluck from destruction the spirit immolated by the will.”

Nonetheless such a grave sinner too secures redemption. Despite his deep sins, he ultimately achieves that self-knowledge which he had not earlier, and which is theologically, at least, redemptive. Undoubtedly, he is finally overthrown and is not allowed to live any more, criticized and condemned in his death, loses his earlier glory and earns bad name even in death. His dead end is directly in opposition to the tragic end of Cawdor who redeems his soul through realization and confession, which is reported by Malcolm to Duncan:

That very frankly he confess’d his treasons,
Implor’d your Highness’ pardon, and set forth
A deep repentance. Nothing in his life
Became him like the leaving it: he died
As one that had been studied in his death,
(I.iv, 5-9)

Whereas, Macbeth neither confesses, nor do we find him repenting for his actions. Moreover, it is difficult to seek redemption on the basis of his moral awareness of his actions, of its consequences and of
his deliberate bonding with the evil forces, which is suggested from the very beginning. Hence, to seek redemption on the basis of moral knowledge would be unfair. He is a deliberate accomplice of the evil powers. How such a man can acquire redemption? Redemption for such a grave sinner is beyond imagination. Is Macbeth past redemption? As a matter of fact, being a hardened criminal, he is now twice removed from his true self: first due to the fall and then due to his deliberate association with the agents of evil. He is aware of his corruption; hence this knowledge too cannot redeem him. "More than any other Shakespearean hero, he has a perfectly clear concept who he is and where he stands."^^

Nevertheless, theologically he can regain his lost self, either through God’s grace and Christ’s atonement or by contemplating the divine order of the created universe of which he is but a part. Through either of the prescribed modes, Macbeth can still save himself from the power of evil.

As far as God’s grace is concerned, he again and again refuses God’s authority and violates His laws. Though Macbeth is not a skeptic, yet he deliberately diverges his self from the benevolent God. Besides this, redemption through Christ’s atonement too is not possible for he is not blessed with any Christ like companion which Othello has in the form of Desdemona.

What remains next is the contemplation of the divine order of the created universe of which he is a part. This mode is implicit in his pen-ultimate speech, just after Macduff’s revelation of his birth that he is “from his mother’s womb/untimely ripp’d”. Macbeth’s immediate reaction is:
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.

(V.viii, 16-21)

It is not that Macbeth was not previously aware of his sin, of its cosmic consequences, of the evil forces embodied in preternatural powers, and of the “Great” bond, that he continuously violated. He was very much a aware of his sins, earlier as well. What makes his situation worse is that despite this knowledge he was moving ahead with his sinful moral choice. The difference, then, between his now gained knowledge and earlier knowledge is the knowledge of fallen self, of evil within implicit in “For it hath cow’d my better part of man”.

When interpreted in terms of the Elizabethan theological and philosophical beliefs, this phrase “better part of man” is vast in its implications. Though the reference is slightest, yet it takes into account the Elizabethan or traditional concept of dual human nature, which is, theologically, an impediment in the way of redemption. This phrase suggests Macbeth’s contemplation of the divine order of the created universe and of his unique place in it. He is aware of evil within his self, which, coincided with the external evil, and doomed his celestial self. This is the knowledge that inspires man to attain celestial heights and can redeem man. He is aware of his degraded place in the Chain, of his corrupt rational self. Along with the knowledge of external evil, which is deceptive and destructive, he is
armed with the knowledge of his evil self. This phrase has brought into context the theological notion of the Chain of Being. Implicit in this phrase is the knowledge of the order manifested in the chain of Being and the knowledge of his degraded place. Earlier Macbeth could trace, evaluate his degradation in terms of honor, love and friends, but for the first time he can evaluate his demoted place in the chain itself.

Macbeth, hence, has regained true self-knowledge, which is redemptive and implicit in this knowledge is the contemplation of the divine order of the created universe, the ‘Chain’. This contemplation is one of the modes to attain salvation. Along with the true nature of external evil, he is aware of the evil within, which he, ironically, was not aware of earlier. For the first time, he consciously renounces evil. His spell is ultimately broken and along with the renunciation of evil, he restrains himself from fighting – “I’ll not fight thee” so he says to Macduff. This realization of his loss of celestial self and the remaining bestiality is redemptive in Macbeth. This is exactly the true nature of man in this post-lepsarian world and the realization of this knowledge inspires man to achieve the better of his self and to secure permanent redemption.

Hence this realization restores his lost glory, his virtues and once again gives back his lost ‘degree’. His improved wit enlightens his soul, reveals him the truth of the preternatural powers- “be these juggling fiends no more believ’d, /That palter with us in a double sense” and learns temperance. He is once again a part of the restored order. Macbeth may have his purgation from his past sins, in his sufferings and
tragic ordeal, in his loss of all that he aspired to. He may be punished in his death, for he is not allowed life on this earth any more, but his redemption lies in his realization of his bestiality, of his lost celestial self, of evil within.

As far as Macbeth's last act is concerned, it does not suggest his diversion from divine Reason, rather it strengthens the belief that he is through and through redeemed soul now. For this time Macbeth does not fight out of his fear to secure his throne and powers, rather he fights like a soldier. According to Knight: "soldiership is the condition of nobility"\textsuperscript{54} in Shakespeare and Macbeth retains this soldiership irrespective of his death. In his last fight he dies a warrior's death. He is fully aware of his doomed self but he is not a coward rather "Bellona's bridegroom". Hence he accepts Macduff's challenge and fights like a soldier:

\begin{verbatim}
Yet I will try the last: before my body
I throw my warlike shield: lay on, Macduff;
And damn'd be him that first cries, 'Hold, enough!'
(V, viii, 32-34)
\end{verbatim}

Macbeth regains his lost glory by not yielding like a coward; by throwing his "war-like shield". He prefers to embrace a soldierly death instead of the death of a coward. He knows that a soldier is one who embraces soldierly death, instead of the death of a coward, irrespective of how painful it is.

In a way it can be summed up that "the artist tries to synthesize emotion, expectation and growth into maturity for making possible the actualization of the potential good. What the characters ultimately
choose for themselves is a balanced and natural way of life after having seen through all forms of excess, self-ignorance and self-indulgence."
References:


4. Ibid. p. 214.


15. Kenneth Muir, *op.cit.* p.4
20. Ibid.
26. Ibid.
31. Ibid. p. 169.

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid.


47. Ibid. p. 228.


51. Ibid.


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