

Chapter Five

MACBETH

5.0 Introduction to Macbeth

Kathleen McLuskie starts her explication of the play *Macbeth* by saying:

Shakespeare's *Macbeth* is a masterpiece of the English cultural heritage. The play appears continuously in theatre, film, and television repertoires throughout the world; it is included in school curricula wherever "English" is taught and it continues to engage the attention of a surprising number of non-professional readers. These markers of the play's cultural provenance, however, do not in themselves explain the play's standing. That status has continually to be ratified by the experience of the play, by the mix of aesthetic and cultural impact that it continues to offer to readers and audiences as they encounter it. (McLuskie 393)

Macbeth was written in 1606 and was published in 1623. The drama is the shortest among Shakespeare's tragedies, free of any diversion or secondary plots. It shows Macbeth's getting hold of power and the following destruction, it shows how both his rise and his downfall are the result of his blind ambition along with alienation and anxiety. *Macbeth* is said to be Shakespeare's most unsettling tragedy, because it provides enough material that invites one's attention towards the examination of the heart and being of a man who seems to possess good intentions in most ways but he also discovers that he is not able to hold back from the temptation to acquire power at all costs. Before the murder of Duncan, Macbeth highly resembles Hamlet in his resistance towards the murder. He even suffers to a great deal thinking that he is not prepared to accept the truth that his present circumstances are the result of his deeds. Many a scholars compare Macbeth with Richard in connection with murder and seizure of power. But the comparison is not very close as Richard had no promise of witches to take actions and his ambitiousness is not reflected in the case of Macbeth. In fact, Macbeth is full of depression and the feature of ambition is almost invisible. A good study will reveal that Shakespeare's *Macbeth* has the elements of Machiavelli's prince who has the theory that the state can come into being only with force that meet the desirable ends. The change in the personality of Macbeth has roots in

Machiavellian principles that support selfishness. In his *The Prince*, Machiavelli has provided the rules for ambitiousness. He says:

Let not the Prince fear to incur blame for those vices without which he cannot easily preserve his States; for if one considers everything carefully, one will find something which seems to be virtue, and to follow it would be ruin; and something else which seems to be vice, but ultimately security and prosperity come of it” (qtd. in Bell 205)

Appearances may be something else for the Prince but most importantly the Prince “need not be a slave to them either; he need not have all the good qualities . . . but should certainly appear to have them. I would even go so far as to say that if he has these qualities and always behaves accordingly he will find them ruinous; if he only appears to have them they will render him service. He should appear to be compassionate, faithful to his word, guileless, and devout. And indeed he should be. But his disposition should be such that, if he needs to be the opposite, he knows how. . . . He should have a flexible disposition, varying as fortune and circumstances dictate” (qtd. in Bell 206)

If we look closer, this issue transcends the political-historical arena and concern itself with the concepts of selfhood and the alienation it brings. It is interesting to note how this last tragedy of Shakespeare becomes more tragic is the thing that even a flexible human like Machiavelli’s prince cannot be tagged as a true representation of our being. Shakespeare’s version of Macbeth’s story offers a disturbing side of our sense of being human by getting away with the logic of understanding an action and its cause. G. Wilson Knight in his *Wheel of Fire* says about Macbeth:

In Macbeth we find not gloom, but blackness: the evil is not relative, but absolute.” And continues “This evil, being absolute and therefore alien to man, is in essence shown as inhuman and supernatural, and is most difficult of location within any philosophical scheme. Macbeth is fantastical and imaginative beyond other tragedies. Difficulty is increased by that implicit blurring of effects, that palling darkness, that overcasts plot, technique, and style. (Knight 161)

Macbeth is a lot sensitive, even poetic person, and this is made clear in his understanding the stakes that followed his well-thought deed of murder. Wilson Knight says, “*Macbeth* has the poetry of intensity: intense darkness shot with the varied intensity of pure light or pure colour. In the same way the moral darkness is shot with imagery of bright purity and virtue” (168).

5.1 Theme of Pride and Alienation

The play revolves around a universal themes: the overpowering nature of pride, the disturbance it incites to, the destruction it results in. In a way, Macbeth’s story is similar to the story of Satan’s fall. Macbeth has grand wishes, as Satan had; he is determined to revolt partly by the situation that someone else is placed higher than him; he tries to turn the cosmos to his wishes, rages war against all the qualities of respect, loyalty, compliance, truth, honesty, compassion, and love. But like in case of Satan, he gets nothing. The violations in his actions put him in physical and mental isolation:

Me miserable! which way shall I fly
Infinite wrath, and infinite despair?
Which way I fly is hell; myself am hell;
And in the lowest deep a lower deep
Still threatening to devour me opens wide. (Milton 107)

Yet in other way, Shakespeare’s version tells us the tale of Dr. Faustus. That a man bargains his life and soul in exchange for superhuman powers just to realize that at the end of the day, his powers are just illusions and he has lost everything including his self and being. Macbeth opens about and says in *Macbeth*:

This supernatural soliciting
Cannot be ill, cannot be good. If ill,
Why hath it given me earnest of success,
Commencing in a truth? I am 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. (20)

He believes to have achieved some kind of superhuman powers:

I will not be afraid of death and bane,
Till Birnam Forest come to Dunsinane. (152)

Again in *Macbeth*:

But swords I smile at, weapons laugh to scorn,
Brandished by man that's of a woman born. (Shakespeare, *Macbeth* 160)

Like Faustus, he realizes towards the end his achievements add up to nothing at all. He says:

I have lived long enough. My way of life
Is fall'n into the sere, the yellow leaf,
And that which should accompany old age,
As honor, love, obedience, troops of friends,
I must not look to have. But, in their stead,
Curses, not loud but deep, mouth-honor, breath,
Which the poor heart would fain deny, and dare not. (149)

In the first encounter, Macbeth has been portrayed as a great general, who implements the commands of the king. The play is concluded with his inevitable and lonely death following his alienation and anxiety. Philosophically, the play becomes a journey protagonist towards alienation. This strange outline can be realized all through the play. Macbeth's role is shown as a person who begins as the vital and most adored person in his the social order and is completely isolated at the end and gets alienated from society and its people. His concluding fortune suggests that of a sacrificial animal. Having caused so much anarchy in people and devastated the oaths of nature, he must be quarantined and distressed so that normal and communal order may be restored again.

The opening of the Shakespeare's play emphasizes Macbeth as the heroic figure who has become the object of everyone's admiration and respect. This is fairly because he has earned this status since he is believed to be the savior of his country. This can be witnessed at several places in the play. Like sergeant says:

For brave Macbeth – well he deserves that name –
Disdaining Fortune, with his brandished steel,
Which smoked with bloody execution,
Like valor's minion carved out his passage
Till he faced the slave –
Which ne'er shook hands, nor bade farewell to him,
Till he unseamed him from the navel to the chops,
And fixed his head upon our battlements. (*Macbeth* 8)

King also lavishly praise him in Act I, iv. It serves to show his heroic figure and his incomparable position in society before his disgrace:

O worthiest cousin,
The sin of my ingratitude even now
Was heavy on me. Thou art so far before
That swiftest wing of recompense is slow
To overtake thee. Would thou hadst less deserved,
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. (*Macbeth* 24)

However, it is attractive to see that the descriptions used in these descriptions are to show Macbeth's skill as a fighter and they involve more troubling effects in the end. These descriptions push Macbeth's emblematic potential and his enchantment – for destruction. Our first portrayal of him as painted by the sergeant is a pragmatic expectation of our last one. Like it is reflected as:

Of this dead butcher and his fiend-like queen,
Who, as 'tis thought, by self and violent hands. (*Macbeth* 167)

Before Duncan's slaughter, we observe the two Macbeths making the first walk that will cut them off from the course of common living and disturb the ways, which guarantee them to human temperament and its society. With considerate ceremony, Lady Macbeth commits her being to the ruling of evil:

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 the access and passage to remorse,
That no compunctious visitings of nature
Shake my fell purpose, nor keep peace between
The effect and it. (*Macbeth* 30)

Later on, Macbeth makes a similar prayer:

Thou sure and firm set earth,
Hear not my steps, which way they walk, for fear
Thy very stones prate of my whereabouts,
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. (*Macbeth* 196)

His alienation from God can be seen in his supplication:

But wherefore could not I pronounce
“Amen”?
I had most need of blessing, and “Amen”
Stuck in my throat. (*Macbeth* 53)

Duncan’s slaughter hastens the route of Macbeth’s alienation and isolation.
Like Malcolm and Donalbain run away from him, Banquo becomes full of
suspicions about him.

How now, my lord? Why do you keep alone,
Of sorriest fancies your companions making,
Using those thoughts which should indeed have died
With them they think on? Things without all remedy
Should be without regard. (*Macbeth* 84)

This is not the only desertion: in the concluding scene we come to know that
Fleance too has escaped, and that Macduff ‘denies his person at our great bidding’
(128) and that Macbeth can hinge on so little on the allegiance of his supporters that
he says in *Macbeth*:

I keep a servant fee'd. I will tomorrow,
And betimes I will, to the weird sisters.
More shall they speak, for now I am bent to know,
By the worst means, the worst. For mine own good,
All causes shall give way. I am in blood. (99)

At the end of the play, we are informed about the escalating hostility to Macbeth's rule, and of sedition against him. Macduff too has fled the scene. "Macduff is as isolated in time as Macbeth. Macduff's paradoxical birth meets the Second Apparition's strange condition for one who might harm Macbeth, and Macduff does quell tyranny and restore, violently, Duncan's interrupted (but also dubiously legitimate) succession. Yet that same birth and the actions it entails place Macduff so far outside traditional genealogical or familial narrative that his wife denies him as husband, as father of their son, as, indeed, a wise, a loyal, or even a natural man" (Braunmuller 22). In the end, Macbeth's alienation is made clear as it comes:

And that which should accompany old age,
As honor, love, obedience, troops of friends,
I must not look to have. But, in their stead,
Curses, not loud but deep, mouth-honor, breath,
Which the poor heart would fain deny, and dare not. (149)

We are reminded time and again that many of his soldiers have left him and joined the enemy. Macbeth says:

Here let them lie
Till famine and the ague eat them up.
Were they not forced with those that should be ours,
We might have met them dareful, beard to beard." (*Macbeth* 155)

And further, Malcolm adds: "We have met with foes/ That strike beside us" (162). There is an proper representation of his ending rupture in his rebellious scrutiny as he says:

They have tied me to a stake, I cannot fly,
But, bear-like, I must fight the course. What's he
That was not born of woman? Such a one

Am I to fear, or none. (160)

5.2 Existential Analysis of Macbeth

In a production by Stratford, Eric Porter played Macbeth's character, as John Russell Brown reports, "his death was that of a tired, angry, disarmed fighter: to make this clear he was killed on stage after he had been encircled by the entire army and had lost all his weapons" (185). He is a cast out in tremendous limits who is standing apart from the world, familiar with witches and with spirits imperceptible to anyone else, making discovery about his quandary which he can never talk about with others. Macbeth is a mediator of evil in the play. He commits horrific crimes but he himself is not a monster, if analyzed critically. Macbeth, in the beginning of the play, starts as a central and most venerated figure in society. The initial episodes of the drama focus concentration on Macbeth as the courageous point of everybody's veneration. However, the images offered in these early episodes propose Macbeth's natural aptitude for devastation: for instance, his sword "smoked with bloody execution", he himself "carved out his passage" and totally "unseamed" his enemy. Even before Duncan's killing we find Macbeth and Lady Macbeth taking the first critical step which will alienate and isolate them from the rest of society. Talking about the importance and the influence of the societies on the plays of Shakespeare, Nicholas Marsh in his book, says:

What is the difference between society as seen in *Macbeth*, and as seen in the other three plays? ... In *King Lear* destructive and chaotic forces are the basic foulness found in people. The beadle 'hotly lusts', just as anybody else would. In *Hamlet* society is seen from the perspective of death and decay, the universal and natural destiny of all human life. The Ghost's influence promotes the death-theme, but he does not exist as actively or solidly as Macbeth's witches. Indeed, Hamlet has already guessed the Ghost's information ('o my prophetic soul!' [1, v, 41])

And he goes to elaborate lengths to find stronger proof of Claudius's guilt by means of the dumb-show. By contrast, in *Macbeth* we hear of a disease whose sufferers have been 'strangely-visited'; we hear the witches discuss their destructive magic, and see them influence Macbeth himself on the other side is 'Heaven', a 'sanctity' and 'healing benediction' that is beyond our understanding. Individuals, and

human society as a whole, are seen as victims, as a passive battleground between these two external forces.

Marsh writes:

Two consequences of this difference are, first, that *Macbeth* is the most religious of the four tragedies, and second, that the cynical Machiavellian philosophy of base 'nature' that is so powerfully expressed through Iago in *Othello*, Edmund in *King Lear*, and in many of Hamlet's own speeches, hardly makes an appearance in *Macbeth*. (116-117)

Possibly, unlike other tragedies of Shakespeare, *Macbeth* narrates a fight between the forces of personality and culture. In the beginning, Macbeth's fear and kindness are almost synonymous. The mere thought of killing Duncan fills his heart with horror that unfixes his physical attributes and all this is overwhelmed with the thoughts of pity for himself as well as others.

The whole tragedy of Macbeth may be read as an examination of the 'deed' pun. Once Macbeth has committed 'the horrid deed', he is struck by the logic of consequences to more and more of the same kind, so much so that his guilt becomes inevitably recognizable. Instead of being tough and free, he finds himself 'cabined, cribbed, confined. He says:

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 cabined, cribbed, confined, bound in
To saucy doubts and fears. (*Macbeth* 91)

Lady Macbeth tries to convince him that this bloody deed can be washed away with water but soon realizes that this cannot be done now. "What's done cannot be undone." (*Macbeth* 144). Thomas McAlindon says on this:

The bloody deed ruptures his (Macbeth's) inner being ('To know my deed, 'twere best not know myself(11.ii.72)), isolates him entirely from his kind (even from his 'dearest partner of greatness') and prompts him in the end to wish that 'the state of the world were now undone' (v.v.50). Macbeth knows he has surrendered his soul to the devil, but whereas Faustus is tortured by the

thought of an eternity in Hell, Macbeth never once reflects on the pains of the afterlife. In effect, damnation is just a metaphor for the suffering he has brought upon himself in this world by sinning against kindness and humankind. (McAlindon 214)

Macbeth offers a gripping story of a man grabbing a chance for prominence offered by paranormal forces and then striving greatly to fight the logic of those alike enigmatic powers. Its dialogues create the moral and emotional insinuations of that fight with an articulateness that gives its protagonist an extreme dramatic right and at the same time involves readers and audiences with compassionate concern totally against moral judgment of his activities. This contradictory pressure between moral judgment and compassionate engagement is deepened by the role of Lady Macbeth. She turns his attraction to greatness into a test of his manliness, willfully distorting her own femininity in the manner. She tries to share his greatness and lessen his psychic fear at his deed but falls to mental irritation and death, leaving him to the final alienation and defeat. In *Macbeth*, many see a historical division in social attitudes:

On one side of it lies the “society of orders” described by social historians—a society that still imagines itself as an organically connected hierarchy bound by reciprocal duties and obligations, insisting that to be a man at all is to be another’s “man”; on the other lies a world of competitive individuals, organized by the ruthless and alienating power of money into something that is beginning to resemble a society of classes. (qtd. in Moschovakis 155)

Macbeth’s contradictory clarification of his dilemma does not really mark a change in him at all but only reshapes a self-alienation that he has been feeling since he first heard the witches’ predictions. This alienation or estrangement is the result of a similar accident of temporally dissimilar selves. Banquo first defines this temporal self-estrangement instantly after the witches give Macbeth and him articulate cognizance of Macbeth’s destiny.

Macbeth and Lady Macbeth adopt the way of avoiding conscience as they murder their king, and the result of that is that action they observe the karma backfiring upon them heavily. Lady Macbeth describes all the chaos gradually but Macbeth comes across this chaos and confusion right after the crime he committed against his king. These two examples in the course of the play show us that how

karma/conscience works its ways—how it is inevitable, and how it appears eventually. Discussing the importance of conscience in Macbeth, Abraham Stoll writes:

With conscience emerging as a central object of inquiry, theorists such as Hume and Perkins take up the challenge of explaining how this inward faculty functions. The array of metaphors which emerges in such discourse shows just how hard it is to describe: conscience is to be found pricking, gnawing, biting, stinging, murmuring, accusing, and witnessing; it is figured as fiery darts, a worm, a notary with a pen, a prison keeper, a little god within the heart, a cutthroat, and a continual feast. One of the most commonly discussed conceptions is the idea that the conscience functions through a sharing of knowledge with an other. (Stoll 132)

A detailed study of the play show how the discordance of sounds and the chaos of imagery which meet Macbeth fail to put forward the verdicts of conscience with clarity. This failure to connect not only trials the practicality of the early modern conscience, but even its actuality, as Macbeth draws recurrently near to the deduction that conscience is a understanding with no other person but oneself.

As vagueness diseases Macbeth in his expressions, so does it vague his sense of observation. There is an amazing shift in his sense perception and seeing, he becomes incapable of organizing the sounds and images around him, he focuses on one point and on the other the next time. In the moments after the murder of Duncan, Macbeth starts losing his true senses and a bridge is created between his self and the society.

After the decision to murder is made, Macbeth prepares himself for the consequences; he is continually troubled by a conscience, which is expressed in even more vague terms. Conscience here does not connect with voices, but as a picture—the “dagger of the mind” which challenges Macbeth in his loneliness. Macbeth’s anxiety is whether this dagger he sees is actually there, or if it is just a product of his elusive mind:

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? (*Macbeth* 195)

Commenting on this dilemma, Abraham Stoll expresses his views in this manner:

When he cannot touch what he sees, Macbeth assumes that the dagger is “of the mind,” and this leads immediately to it being false and a product of a diseased brain. In turning to his own brain as the source of the dagger, Macbeth cuts off the possibility that it issues from an other—rejecting the interpretation of the dagger as a part of the supernatural knowing with of conscience. The most common metaphor for conscience’s action, that it pricks, is implicit in the image of the dagger. (Stoll 136)

Despite Macbeth’s show of astonishment at Fleance’s existence, “It is alluring to believe that Macbeth is the secretive third assassin who is involved in the deed—so that he only half-participates in the other assassination. Macbeth can barely acknowledge (even to himself) his participation and this suggests the degree of his splitting being: because if he is the third assassin, it discloses both a developing anxiety and a mounting obsession with normal control (complete self-repression, super attentiveness to detail, and a plethora of other self-justifying apparatuses aimed at satisfying to others and to himself the delusion of kingship, including the sham of surprise on learning of Fleance’s escape—which looks like his excessive show of shock on learning of Duncan’s death). Macbeth’s secretive deception of uninvolved demonstrates his growing cowardice, alienation, and lack of a steady vital self.

It seems that our protagonist has plunged himself into an insane, irrational phase of extremism which all concerns his perception about his self and the society. He has totally separated himself from all human race, and ensnared himself in the exhaustive pressure to execute all the ghastly acts of viciousness as in *Macbeth*:

I am in blood
Stepped in so far that, should I wade no more,

Returning were as tedious as go o'er.
Strange things I have in head, that will to hand,
Which must be acted ere they may be scanned. (195)

This struggling of Macbeth is very well discussed by Piotr Sadowski, he says:

The apparent indifference with which Macbeth greets the news of his wife's death ("She should have died hereafter," 5.5.17) signals the next step in his own alienation from life, typical for endodynamic tyrants. Also consistent with his endodynamic character is Macbeth's unconscious desire to place himself outside the natural scheme of things by achieving a quasi-divine immortality and invulnerability—the ultimate dream of an endodynamic who cannot tolerate any loss of power, here, the physiological power that sustains his life. It has always been some small consolation to the victims of tyranny that the tyrants, for all their formidable sociological power, cannot compensate for the loss of their own physiological power indefinitely and eventually have to die, like their victims. This explains the irrational obsessions of despots with longevity and with all sorts of "elixirs of immortality," with which they hope to escape natural laws. (Sadowski 161)

In spite of seeming inconsistency in characterization, the sleepwalking scene continues to be intensely influential. Lady Macbeth's sleepwalking shows us the complete estrangement and alienation from everything, self, society, and humans. The Doctor, in this connection, says:

A great perturbation in nature, to receive at once
the benefit of sleep, and do the effects of watching. In this
slumbry agitation . . . (*Macbeth* 142)

The oxymoron "slumbry agitation" tells us that there is "a sort of living death in which Lady Macbeth has "at once the benefit of sleep, and . . . the effects of watching." The paradox of being wide-awake, full of life, able to communicate, and at the same time unconscious and inattentive provides a moving picture of isolation and alienation. Moreover, it is difficult to understand most of what Lady Macbeth utters or does in her sleepwalking as a manifestation of her guilty conscience." About the letter of Lady Macbeth, Haverkamp says:

The letter conveys success – “They met me in the day of success,” reads Lady Macbeth aloud, starting the monologue in which the message becomes the medium of bloodshed and the kingly victim, following Shakespearean Genealogies of Power inexorably, becomes the effect, whose risk-managers Machiavelli recognized and publicized in the new princes. In this regard as well, Shakespeare does not miss the medial double-plot: the mariological framing of the good news, which the Lady is reading, leaves little doubt: “Lay it into thy heart,” recommends the spouse at the end of the letter, which allows her to conceive the message of near-success (1.5.13–14). She conceived, but the seed is the violence by which her savior, marked by his end, awaits a travesty of the Christian myth of sacrificial death. His blood comes over him and his successors. No king can be resurrected from these dead. (84-85)

The play follows the popular beliefs but discovers the psychological and transcendental basis of estrangement and alienation. There is continuous intertwining of the supernatural and the spiritual and a change from one to the other, from the daggers, to the ghosts, to the witches and the apparitions, which must have a reality apart from Macbeth. This uncertainty in the handling of the supernatural enables a contemporary audience to react to the power that it still maneuvers our imagination while recognizing it as a forecast of the characters’ deep inner lives.

Most of the important action of the drama happens inside Macbeth's mind; we see the workings of the mind of a murderer and see everything through his eyes. This fact is indispensable the character he plays, because Macbeth may be said is the mere character in tragedies of Shakespeare who can be tagged as a “villain” rather than a “hero.” In the end of this drama “no sympathy is articulated for him and there is no reference to the talents that have been unfortunately sacrificed by his downfall. In is significant to note that even the heroic potentials that he displays at the beginning of the play are of a restricted kind. He is acclaimed for his faithfulness and service to Scotland, but from his first entrance it is pretty clear that these qualities have already been destabilized.” He might be a courageous soldier, but he never ceases to be “this dead butcher.”

One can sympathize extremely with Macbeth because one is able to experience the interior conflict and one is able to feel his depressed reaction to his

own evil thoughts. We are also able to “share the devastating spiritual insights that encourage him to continue no further with the murder, and experience his sufferings of conscience after he has committed it. These are the things that enables us to appreciate his prospective nobleness. It is only quality, as we have to preview it almost in spite of Macbeth.” He is reluctant to acknowledge, imagining himself worried only with whether he can run away from homicide, but finally breaks it when he comes across the reality of being and self. The critic aptly remarks that:

It only looks as if the murdered king Duncan (just as the old king Hamlet) had been an undisputed ruler; he was most likely a hero in the manner of Macbeth, whose savage violence he underwrites and facilitates with open admiration: “O valiant cousin! worthy gentleman!” he bursts out in raw enthusiasm over the bloodthirsty report of an officer who, reveling in his own wounds, captures Macbeth’s latest heroic deed in one of the most disgusting descriptions of “bloody execution” ever delivered. (Haverkamp 80)

The tragedy is intensified by the point that Macbeth already knew what the costs of his crimes can be, but he chose to stifle that awareness. The play reveals the unavailability of justice because the vengeance is in the nature of the deed itself. In order to prepare himself to slaughter Duncan he must alter his character. He thought “that by killing he could become a ruler; but he finds he has become only a hated murderer. In order to attain the crown he has to terminate everything in his self that would make it more than an empty symbol for eternity. He comes to know that one cannot isolate oneself from one's own activities; he had hoped that he might get away with this horrible deed but finds after the murder of Duncan that he cannot in real.” We can see a comparable “shift of connotation between his words as he goes to kill Duncan, uneasy to get it over, he says, “I go, and it is done”, and the perturbed finality of “I have done the deed” on his return; and towards the end of the scene his one desire is that it could be undone, “Wake Duncan with thy knocking! I would thou couldst” (*Macbeth* 56).

Both Macbeth and Lady Macbeth “must live with their past wrong doings, and that is their retribution. There is also the fear of discovery, but that is not the principal cause of their “terrible dreams.” When Macbeth says “Our fears in Banquo Stick deep” he might fear what Banquo may doubt what he lives on is his sense of moral

lowliness).” This reprisal is intensely uncovered when one enters into the psyche of the all the characters. The somnambulism scene one can guess the only one manifestation of remorse for the sufferers, even though a poignant one, which is that Lady Macbeth took o part directly in ghastly scheme. She reveals no dread of sentence and says “Out, damned spot. Out, I say! – One, two – why / then, ’tis time to do’t. – Hell is murky. – Fie, my lord, fie” (*Macbeth* 142) Lady Macbeth's hell is the information of her own being:

In the sleepwalking scene, the only time she is on stage with another woman, the only person she talks to is Macbeth. Most of her lines are explicitly addressed to him, and all of them could be. Like Lear’s last conversation with Cordelia, it is one half of a dialogue with someone who does not respond, and it may be that lack of response that keeps drawing her back to him, refighting the old arguments, reissuing the old commands. Though she scrambles different murders together (V.ii.59–61), her memories center on the murder of Duncan, the night of their consummation, the blood on her own body she cannot wipe away. (Leggatt 379)

5.3 Summing Up

Macbeth is doomed to alienate himself because he suffers in a hell of his own making. “His entrance into it is marked by the whimsical conversion of the doorkeeper of his own castle into the doorkeeper of Hell-gate; he says that he has given his “eternal jewel” to “the common enemy of man” and in the future scenes of the play he is frequently referred to as “devil”, “fiend” or “hell-hound.” He is in a kind of hell that is described by Marlowe’s Mephistophilis, in *Doctor Faustus*:

Hell hath no limits, not is circumscribed
In one self place; for where we are is hell,
And where hell is, there must we ever be. (221)

For Macbeth, the assassination of Duncan is an “image” of the “great doom”, “because it was then that he ruled on and damned himself, a damnation that is articulated in his utter self-condemnation in the act that follows the assassination. He had been ready to “jump the life to come” but divine as well as secular penalty comes in this life too. He is repeatedly tortured by the consequences for himself of his deeds

against others. He consciously separates himself from humankind by suppressing his own “milk of human kindness” and then finds he cannot run away from this self-imposed segregation.” He is devoid of companionship, abandoned by supporters, alienated from his better half. He is “extremely aware of what he has forfeited by murdering “the gracious Duncan” and the thought of it makes death seem a release – “I have lived long enough” he says. The equivalent to her sleep-walking, in displaying how his character and viewpoint have been misleading by the horrors he has shaped, is the passage:

I have almost forgot the taste of fears.
The time has been, my senses would have cooled
To hear a night shriek, and my fell of hair
Would at a dismal treatise rouse and stir
As if life were in't. I have supped full with horrors.
Direness, familiar to my slaughterous thoughts
Cannot once start me. (*Macbeth* 155)

The tone totally is different, “we are not taken inside directly into his unconscious mind as we are into Lady Macbeth's mind and his strict recognition of an ongoing familiarity with “direness” and “slaughterous thoughts” does not have the miserable pathos of his wife's remembering of those fears, but the second of these two speeches displays what this heartlessness has cost him, and discloses as weighty a despair: the whole of his life is only “a tale told by an idiot . . . signifying nothing.” Nothing exists but delusion, the theatrical trick of the “poor player” -or, as he had put it when his mind was first mastered by the Witches' deceptive possibilities for the future,” “Nothing is But what is not.” Anselm Haverkamp in this regard writes:

Whereas in *Hamlet* there is endless reflection and deferred action, in *Macbeth* the events precipitate one another in an unstoppable fury from the witches' prophecy to its speedy fulfillment; from the sudden ascent of the hero to kingship and his just as rapid fall – “a tale/ Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury/ Signifying Nothing” – in short: history in the face of whose prospective, even all but apocalyptic, rage the present sinks into nothingness. The “medium of reflection,” which through Hamlet's mask of melancholy engenders the excessive running time of the play, in the case of Macbeth's rise and fall, is

violence. There is no piece of literature (not even Schiller's *Robbers* touches it) that would take violence so clearly and exclusively as its theme, object and plot, impetus and tendency, as *Macbeth*. (Haverkamp 75)

The idea of "immoral as denial and delusion is given convincing expression in *Macbeth*. For orthodox Christianity evil must be fundamentally negative. God created the whole universe; all reality is therefore decent, and evil can only be unreality, a rejection of that establishment. It is inexorably damaging, and also self-destructive. Shakespeare's accomplishment is to bring this home creatively to audiences who do not essentially share these religious beliefs; we are made to experience the mental barrenness involved in assassination. Macbeth articulates the same religious belief in relation to God's "graded organization of the universe when he says:

I dare do all that may become a man;
Who dares do more is none. (*Macbeth* 42)

Man is man because "he inhabits that specific rank in creation. If he attempts to rise above that rank he is only rejecting his own nature and converts into "none"; at best he can only drop to a lower rank, and Lady Macbeth is religiously correct in signifying that he must therefore have been an animal when he originally proposed the murder of Duncan." His wrongdoings become progressively inhuman, and at the end of the play his nerve is that of a trapped animal:

But, bear-like, I must fight the course. What's he
That was not born of woman? Such a one
Am I to fear, or none. (*Macbeth* 160)

By killing Duncan, he is terminating himself. His 'single state of man' had been "stunned by his inner struggle, and the developing breakdown of his personality is symbolized by the recurrent disagreement between his hands and his eyes. He can steel himself to homicide only by suppressing everything that gives him value as a human, so that he "Moves like a ghost", and his suppressed feelings strike back aggressively with the illusion of the dagger and the overwhelming self-accusations under which he crumbles completely after the murder. He is completely alienated from himself. He recuperates an "appearance of equanimity but he is still at conflict with himself; his moral spirits are no longer under his control because he has barred

them from his consciousness, and they continue to plague him in his dreams and the ghost of Banquo” that forces him actually to deceive himself. However thoroughly he suppresses it, his self-condemnation is entrenched deeply in his mind. Haverkamp writes:

The crux in *Macbeth* is just as distinct as the surrounding environment is alienating. The wild Scottish scene of clans does not harmonize with the Upper Italian cities, it submerges it in a barbaric light; that, however, is the lighting effect that Machiavelli himself supported in his Florentine setting, and that up until the present is not without an effect: that political avant-gardes cannot act without regression into “barbarism” (barely anyone is ever concerned with the reputation of the poor barbarians). Thus, the Scottish scene in a certain way naturalizes what happened on the piazza of Cesena in Macbeth’s savage will to “bloody execution” (1.2.18). What leaves the Cesenati speechless sets free a hidden sadism, whose masochistic front side it satisfies. (80)

For most of the last acts of the play *Macbeth* is in an extremely phobic state, “alternating between black misery and explosions of ‘valiant fury’ that are similar to insanity and lead him into completely illogical movements such as the extermination of Macduff’s family and the suicidal act of deserting the defences of Dunsinane castle.” As discussed earlier evil is fundamentally negative it must work through trickeries to cover its real nature. The witches “personalize that nature. Just as the forms taken by the ghosts reveal the true meaning of their words so the witches and their charms represent the chaotic, arid transcendental state to which Macbeth and Lady Macbeth will be reduced eventually, but they hide this by offering deceptions,” the deception of kingship without true royalty and of safety that turns out to be a source of uncertainty. Deliberating on the philosophy of Machiavelli, Haverkamp says:

In the dramatic totalization that in *Macbeth* drives Shakespeare’s theater to its bitter end, quite other than in the exemplary novelistics of Machiavelli, which puts it at an analytic distance, the rolling stone cannot be stopped in any market square, cannot be captured by any other fixated snapshot than that of the overcome “usurper’s head”. (82)

Evil must be evasive, “and it forces its victims to vacillate with themselves. Having seen the reality of himself instantly after he has killed Duncan, Macbeth can only cling to delusions as he relies frantically on the evasions of the spirits as an guarantee of his safety.” Not only does he learn that the momentary masquerade “he had adopted to hide his schemes against Duncan must become a perpetual mask but when that fails he must deceive himself into philosophy that his troubled state of mind is caused only by fear and that the attacks of his suppressed conscience are a “self-abuse” that will be treated by even more monstrous crimes.” In moods of ecstasy he can refer to himself as “our high-placed Macbeth” or tell his wife to be “jocund” when another assassination is planned but when he stops to think he knows the emptiness of this audacity, and his vicious crimes are less a way to guarantee his security than to escape from “the torture of the mind” on which he continues “to lie In restless ecstasy.”

He flies from thought into monotonous action, from the depressing chill of words to the “heat of deeds”, and “his activities become progressively impulsive to avoid the torture of thinking, he says, “This deed I’ll do before this purpose cool.” But when he is stuck in Dunsinane castle all his agitated activity - hanging out banners, arming before it is needed - cannot avert him from expiring into those periods of forsaken reflection that show his consciousness of his actual state.” We may appreciate his refusal to succumb passively to defeat –even some critics have likened it to Satan's daring disobedience of God in *Paradise Lost* - but our empathy for him springs chiefly from a realization that he is still troubled by the standards that he deliberately abandoned, and his desolation at their loss gives them a reality that makes the commendable devoutness of Malcolm seem somewhat complacent.

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