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THE WARWICK SHAKESPEARE

THE TRAGEDY
OF
MACBETH

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INTRODUCTION.

1. LITERARY HISTORY OF THE PLAY.

The *Tragedy of Macbeth*, like most of Shakespeare's later plays, was not printed separately in quarto form during his lifetime. It first appeared in the collected edition issued in 1623, seven years after the poet's death, by John Heminge and Henry Condell. Here it stands between *Julius Caesar* and *Hamlet*. In the preface to this edition, known as the First Folio, Heminge and Condell claim to have taken great care to present an accurate text of the plays, "absolute in their numbers as he conceived them". But it would not be safe to put overmuch confidence in this boast. The text of *Macbeth*, in particular, is very unsatisfactory. It is full of printer's errors. Verse-passages are printed as prose, or cut up into irregular lines without regard to metre. And in many places the original sense has been reduced to nonsense./1 Some of these mistakes were corrected in the Second Folio of 1632; some have been

emended by the ingenuity of Theobald and his fellow commentators; others are perhaps beyond the reach of scholarship.

It is improbable that the version of the play from which the First Folio text was taken was in the state in which Shakespeare left it. Opinions differ as to the extent of the modification which it may have undergone. The Clarendon Press editors think that it had been freely touched up by Thomas Middleton. They profess to be able to trace his hand in certain rhyming tags and passages "not in Shakespeare's manner". Attempts

/1 Instances of the state of the First Folio text will be found in the notes on i. 1. 10; i. 3. 37; ii. 2. 2; ii. 2. 16.

in a similar direction have been made by Mr. F. G. Fleay./1 Middleton was a younger contemporary of Shakespeare's, and wrote for the King's Company between 1615 and 1624. If it was found necessary during that period to make any alterations in *Macbeth*, it would have been natural enough to intrust the task to him. But I cannot believe that it is possible to disentangle such alterations from the original stuff of the piece; and, in spite of Coleridge, a criticism which can attribute the Porter's speech in act ii. sc. 3 to any other than Shakespeare appears to me strangely untrustworthy./2 It is not unlikely, however, that the First Folio was printed from a copy of *Macbeth* which had been 'cut' and 'written up' for stage purposes./3 This theory would account for the unusual shortness of the play;/4 for certain discrepancies in the incidents;/5 and for the number of incomplete lines, which may very well be due to the excision of speeches or parts of speeches./6 I think also that there has been some tampering with the witch-scenes by the introduction of a superfluous personage, Hecate, and of a few lines lyrical in character and incongruous to the original conception of the weird sisters. This condemnation would cover act iii. sc. 5, and act iv. sc. 1. ll. 39-43; 125-132. These passages are very likely the work of Middleton, for they closely resemble in style certain scenes in a play of his called *The Witch*./7 This play was discovered in MS. in 1778, and its importance was at once observed, and perhaps exaggerated, by Shakespearian critics. Steevens assumed that *The Witch* was written before *Macbeth*, and inferred from certain parallels between the two plays that Shakespeare borrowed hints from his fellow-dramatist. A

/1 See the Transactions of the New Shakspere Society for 1874; Mr. Fleay's Shakespeare Manual, p. 245, and a later paper in Anglia, vol. vii. On the passages attributed to Middleton by these critics see Appendices E, F, and G.

/2 See Appendix F.

/3 Similar instances of such stage-versions are probably to be seen in the Folio *Hamlet* and the First Quarto of *Romeo and Juliet*.

/4 *Macbeth* has 1993 lines; the only play that is shorter is *Comedy of Errors*, which has 1770. The longest play, *Antony and Cleopatra*, has 3964, and the average length is 2857. /5 See notes on i. 2. 53; i. 3. 73; i. 3. 108; iii. 6. 49.

/6 See Essay on Metre, § 5 (iii).

/7 See Appendix E, and the notes on the doubtful passages.

saner scholarship has, however, led to the conclusion that *The Witch* was probably not written before 1613, and consequently that Middleton was the borrower. Having written his own play, he may have interpolated a few lines in a similar style into *Macbeth*, with the object, perhaps, of introducing a musical element. It is noteworthy that in the stage-directions to two of the doubtful passages appear the titles of songs which are given in full in *The Witch*./1

Three possible dates have been suggested for the original production of *Macbeth*. The latest of these is 1610. It depends upon the testimony of one Simon Forman, an astrologer. Forman was in the habit of keeping a manuscript book, and entering in it his play-house impressions. He records a performance of *Macbeth* at the Globe on April 20, 1610. From the description he gives, it is clear that what he saw was Shakespeare's play, and that in its main outlines it was identical with the version in the Folio./2 But there is no proof that Forman was at the first performance; revivals were frequent on the Elizabethan stage; and the weight of evidence is in favour of an earlier date. This can hardly be later than 1607, for in *The Puritan*, published in that year, occurs a manifest allusion to Banquo's ghost. It is in act iv. sc. 1: "Instead of a jester we 'll have a ghost in a white sheet sit at the upper end of the table". It is worth noting that in the same year William Warner added to the new edition of his *Albion's England* a history of Macbeth, as if public attention had been recently called to the subject./3 On the other hand, the constant reference throughout the play to James I. makes it practically certain that it was produced after his accession in March 1603. The interest taken by this king in witchcraft is notorious; the vision of Macbeth in act iv. sc. 1 is a scarcely veiled tribute to one who traced his descent from Banquo; and a passage in sc. 3 of the same act is as obviously inspired by the 'touching for the king's evil', revived by James,

/1 See Appendix B.

/2 Forman's description of the play will be found in Appendix A.

/3 The Warner coincidence by itself proves nothing, for his narrative might have suggested the subject to Shakespeare.

and claimed by him as hereditary in his house. With less certainty we may push the limits of time a little closer. The incident of the thane of Cawdor has been compared with the famous conspiracy of the Earl of Gowry and his brother in 1601./1 The bestowal of Cawdor's honours on Macbeth recalls the investiture of the dignities of Scone, formerly held by Gowry, upon Sir David Murray, who had been forward in saving the king's life from the conspirators. This event took place on April 7, 1605./2 In 1605 also is recorded a curious performance given before James during a progress at Oxford. On reaching the gates of St John's College he was met by three boys, representing the nymphs or Sibyls who had foretold the reign of Banquo's descendants. These delivered orations in Latin and English./3 It is very possible that this performance suggested the writing of *Macbeth*, and that it was produced on the occasion of the visit of the King of Denmark to England in July 1606. Oldys, the antiquary, has a story of a letter sent by James I. to Shakespeare, and it has been conjectured that it was a command to write this play. On the whole, the production of *Macbeth* at the Globe may be provisionally put in 1606. This date is accepted by the majority of scholars, and it is consistent with the style and thought of the play. Malone further supports it by tracing in act ii. sc. 3 various allusions, to the trial of Garnet the Jesuit on March 28, to the low prices of that year, and to the French hose then fashionable./4 It should be noted, however, that some critics have doubted the authenticity of this passage, and that such allusions can easily be introduced in the process of 'writing up' a play.

Mr. Fleay, whose laborious and valuable investigations give him a claim to be heard, thinks that the play pro-

/1 See J. H. Burton's History of Scotland, vol. vi. chap. 61.

/2 There is a difficulty in supposing that there is any allusion to the Gowry conspiracy in *Macbeth*. Another play on the subject, produced by the same company in 1604, got them into trouble. See Fleay, Life and Work of Shakespeare, p. 152. Was *Macbeth* an apology?

/3 This incident is described in Wake's *Rex Platonicus*, in Anthony Nixon's *The Oxford Triumph* (1605), and in MS. Baker 7044. The verses were written by Matthew Gwynne, and are annexed to his *Vertumnus* (1607).

/4 See notes on ii. 3. 5; ii. 3. 9; ii. 3. 15.

duced in 1606 was only a revision of an earlier work dating from 1601./1 In that year the Lord Chamberlain's (afterwards the King's) Company was in disgrace at court, and travelled in the provinces. There is no reason to doubt the tradition that they went as far as Scotland;/2 and Mr. Fleay thinks that *Macbeth* was originally

written for performance before King James at Aberdeen in the winter following the Gowry conspiracy. He supports his view by pointing out that the play as a whole is more closely related to *Julius Caesar* and *Hamlet*, its companions in the First Folio, which belong to about 1601, than to *Lear* and *Othello*, which are later. He also suggests that the description of Cawdor's execution may have been inspired by the fate of the Earl of Essex. But Cawdor cannot well be both Gowry and Essex, and it is very doubtful if the players, whose disrepute at home was due to their connection with Essex' conspiracy, would be likely to make any allusion to that event./3 The whole question of the extent to which personal and political allusions may be found in Shakespeare's plays would repay careful study. There is a tendency to be hazardous with such speculations. I think that the critic who identifies Hamlet and Gertrude with James I. and Mary Queen of Scots has been hazardous.

From the Restoration to the present day *Macbeth* has been universally popular upon the stage. Pepys saw it eight times between 1664 and 1668. But the *Macbeth* of the Restoration was hardly Shakespeare's play. The process of adaptation begun by Middleton was

/1 See his Life and Work of Shakespeare; Section iv.

/2 The question is discussed at length in Knight's larger edition of Shakespeare; but the entries in the registers of the Town Council of Aberdeen for October 9 and 22, 1601, are decisive. These show that a company of players were at the Scotch court in that year, and that one of them was Laurence Fletcher, whom we know to have been a member of the Chamberlain's Company. The argument from Shakespeare's portrayal of the Scotch temper and climate is less satisfactory. He is equally successful with Italy, yet there is no proof that he was ever there.

/3 A performance of *Richard II.* was given by the Lord Chamberlain's Company on the night before the Essex rising was intended to take place, with the object of encouraging the conspirators. See my edition of *Richard II.* (Falcon series), and Mr. Hales' Notes and Essays on Shakespeare.

continued in accordance with the taste of the time; the musical element was still further extended; and the whole became rather an opera than a tragedy. Two moments in this change are marked by the printed versions of 1673 and 1674. The first of these follows, in most respects, the text of the Folios. Middleton's song, "Come away, Hecate", is inserted in full in act iii. sc. 5; and two other songs for the witches have been added at the end of act ii. scenes 2 and 3 respectively. It has been conjectured that these songs are by Sir William Davenant, Shakespeare's godson. In any case, Davenant is responsible for the edition of 1674. This contains the three songs already printed in 1673, together with that of "Black spirits and white", also by Middleton. But moreover, the whole text of the play has been mutilated

and perverted; hardly a scene escapes; everywhere the rhythm and thought of the original has been obscured by bald additions and alterations of the adapter's own./1 It was for this travesty that Lock's beautiful music was composed, and in this that Betterton won such conspicuous success. It held the stage until 1744, when Garrick appeared in a version which was very nearly Shakespeare's. It was at this time that Mrs. Pritchard made a reputation as Lady Macbeth, which has only been overshadowed by that of Mrs. Siddons. It need hardly be said that every actor of distinction since Garrick's day has essayed the part of Macbeth.

2. SOURCE OF THE PLOT.

For the outlines of the story of *Macbeth* Shakespeare had recourse to a book from which he had already drawn the materials for his plays on English history. This was the great folio *Chronicle of England and Scotland*, by Raphael Holinshed and others, first printed in 1577, and afterwards, in the revised form which the poet used, in 1587. Shakespeare follows with some closeness the details of the reigns of Duncan and Macbeth as given in Holinshed's picturesque prose. The extent of his indebtedness may be

/1 For a further note on these Restoration versions, see Appendix B.

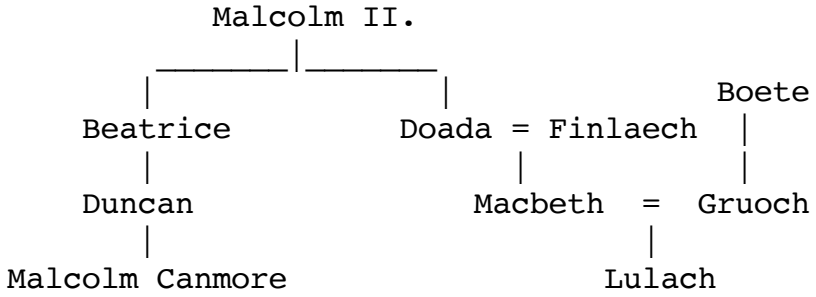
gathered from a study of the passages quoted in Appendix C. But he has interwoven with the continuous narrative incidents taken from other parts of the same chronicles. The chief of these is the account of the midnight murder of Duncan. This is evidently based on that given by Holinshed of the murder of Duncan's great-grandfather, King Duffe, by Donwald, the governor of his castle, and his wife. Shakespeare has also worked in some of the striking features of traditionary witch-lore. Much of this, in a time of plentiful witch-trials, was no doubt matter of common knowledge; but the poet may possibly have consulted Reginald Scot's *Discoverie of Witchcraft* (1584), or King James the First's curious little tract on *Demonologie* (1597)./1

To come back to Holinshed -- the chronicle of Macbeth there given is derived from the Latin *Scotorum Historiae* of Hector Boyis, Boethius, or Boece (1527). This was translated into Scotch by John Bellenden, archdeacon of Moray (1536), and Holinshed may have used the translation as well as the original./2 Boethius in his turn had borrowed from Fordun, a chantry priest of Aberdeen, who wrote a *Chronica Gentis Scotorum* in the 14th century./3 It need hardly be said that the narrative common to all these chroniclers is legend rather

than history. The labours of recent scholars have enabled us to reconstruct, shadowily enough, the historical Macbeth./4

In 1031 A.D. Malcolm II. of Scotland did homage to Cnut, King of England. He was accompanied on that occasion by two chieftains, under-kings, or maormors. One of these was Maelbaeþa, Mealbeaðe, or Macbeoðe, maormor of Moray. It is thus that Macbeth first comes before us. He was the grandson of King Malcolm by his daughter Doada, who married Finnlaech. His own wife was Gruoch, daughter of Boete.

/1 See Appendix D. /2 See i. 3. 84, note.
/3 Fordun's book forms the first part of the Scoti-chronicon (ed. Skene, 1871).
/4 The following sketch is based upon the discussions contained in Freeman's Norman Conquest, Skene's Celtic Scotland, and Robertson's Early Kings of Scotland.



In 1032 Malcolm murdered the head of Gruoch's house, probably Boete himself, the motive being that Malcolm had only daughters, and Boete had a distant claim to the throne. In 1034 Malcolm died, and was succeeded by his grandson Duncan, cousin of Macbeth. Duncan at once named his son Malcolm Canmore to be his heir and Prince of Cumberland. Macbeth and Gruoch had therefore no good-will towards the reigning branch of the family. Duncan was an ineffective king; he invaded England unsuccessfully, and then entered upon a war with Thorfinn, the Norwegian Jarl of Orkney. Macbeth, who was commander of the army, took the opportunity to make common cause with Thorfinn, had Duncan murdered at Bothgouanan, 'the Smith's bothie', and in his own right or his wife's assumed the crown. His reign was one of order and prosperity; his bounty to the church became famous in Scotland, and even at Rome; the homage paid by Malcolm to England does not seem to have been renewed in his lifetime. But he had a formidable enemy and neighbour in Siward, Earl of Northumbria. In 1054, Siward, with the consent of Edward the Confessor and the Witenagemòt, invaded Scotland by land and sea. A great battle took place

on July 27, in which Macbeth was defeated and Siward's son Osborn and his nephew Siward were slain. Malcolm Canmore was proclaimed king, but Macbeth kept up the war in the north for four years, until he fell at Lumfanan in Aberdeenshire, in 1058. The resistance of his son or stepson, Lulach, was soon crushed. A slightly different version of some of the facts is given in Wyntown's *Cronykill* (bk. vi. ch. 18). Here it is stated that Gruoch was the wife of the murdered Duncan, that Macbeth was his nephew, and that Malcolm Canmore was illegitimate. Some scholars have thought

that Shakespeare had Wyntown before him, as well as Holinshed./1

Such is the actual substratum upon which the accretions of time and the genius of a poet have fashioned an eternal tragedy. In several important respects -- Macbeth's relations to the Norwegians, the character of his reign, the rapidity of his downfall, the story diverges widely from the reality. The supernatural element is a characteristically mediaeval addition, and it contains two bits of widespread folklore in the incidents of the birth of Macduff and of the moving forest./2 Macduff himself, Banquo, Fleance, and their legendary connection with the Stuarts, have no sure place in history.

It is possible that Shakespeare was not the first to make a literary use of the story of Macbeth. Allusion has already been made to the interlude on the subject, played before James in 1605. Mr. Collier quotes two references which seem to point to a still earlier version. One is from Kempe's *Nine daies Wonder* (1600)./3 It runs as follows: -- "I met a proper upright youth, only for a little stooping in the shoulders, all heart to the heel, a penny poet, whose first making was the miserable stolen story of Mac-doel, or Macdobeth, or Macsomewhat, for I am sure a Mac it was, though I never had the maw to see it". The other is an entry in the Register of the Stationers' Company: -- "27 die Augusti 1596. Tho. Millington -- Thomas Millington is likewise fined at ijs vjd for printing of a ballad contrary to order, which he also presently paid. Md. the ballad entitled The taming of a Shrew. Also one other ballad of Macdobeth"./4 I do not think we have the materials to say whether the 'ballad' here mentioned was really a stage-play or a ballad in the strict sense.

/1 An extract from Wyntown's *Cronykill of Scotland* was printed in Simrock's Remarks on the Plots of Shakespeare's Plays (Sh. Soc. 1850).

/2 See Simrock's Remarks.

/3 Ed. Dyce, Camden Soc. 1840.

/4 See Collier's 2nd ed. of Shakespeare (1858).

3. CRITICAL APPRECIATION.

It would appear that about 1601 Shakespeare lost his faith in the world. The light-heartedness of his earlier plays vanished; the laughter died away upon his lips, and the note of criticism, first struck, hesitatingly and, as it were, against his will, in Jaques, became dominant, swelling at last to the titanic denunciations of Lear and Timon. Attempts have been made to connect this phase in the poet's mental history with personal losses in the death of those dear to him, and, perhaps more justifiably, with the spiritual discouragement darkly shadowed forth in the Sonnets. However this may be, the clear fact is that for eight or nine years he devoted himself to the analysis of triumphant evil, setting forth in strong relief the failures, the disillusions, the ineffectiveness of humanity. Temperament at war with destiny; the brute in man trampling upon the god -- these are the themes he is compelled to illustrate. To this period, so far as we can fix their dates, belong all the great tragedies with the exception of *Romeo and Juliet*; and here too come the three 'bitter comedies', in some respects more sad than the tragedies themselves. The pessimistic attitude towards life was not indeed final with Shakespeare. For a while he was 'in the depths' -- to borrow Mr. Dowden's happy phrase; but he rose to walk the heights; his last words proclaim the ultimate victory of good in the serene philosophy of *The Tempest*, *Cymbeline*, and *The Winter's Tale*. But while it endured, as Mr. Swinburne has pointed out in the case of *Othello*, his pessimism was deeper, more unchequered even than that of Aeschylus; there is no purification of Apollo shining in the distance. Nor can any better example of this mood be taken than *Macbeth*; the simplicity and grandeur of the presentment reveal clearly the deep underlying thought. It is a drama of man at odds with fate, driven from sin to sin and its retribution by external invincible forces. It will be the object of this Appreciation to show how the central idea thus stated moulds and informs the whole play.

A drama, like every other work of art, if it is to affect the

spectator at all, must do so by means of some unity, some singleness of impression left upon him. It must be a whole, and be felt as such -- not a mere bundle of disconnected parts, however beautiful in themselves. Aristotle, analysing the masterpieces of Sophocles,

laid down that a drama should concern itself with the development of a single action, in its beginning, middle, and end. The Unity of Action, so formulated, has been held at various times as a canon of literary orthodoxy, sharply dividing classicist from romantic schools of dramatic writing. And with it have universally gone two other canons -- the so-called Unities of Place and Time; the one demanding an unchanged scene, the other an action continuous and complete in a period roughly equivalent to that of representation; at the most, in a single day. The Unity of Action goes, no doubt, nearly to the root of the dramatic problem; the Unities of Place and Time are less vital. They have their origin in the special limitations of the Greek stage, made rigid by the conservative element in the Greek drama, which never forgot to be a worship of Dionysus. The practice of Seneca, so influential among the scholar-poets of the Renaissance, introduced the Unities to the modern world, and it was not until after a severe struggle that they failed to impose their bonds upon the Elizabethan theatre. The best landmark of this struggle is Sidney's *Apologie for Poetrie*,/1 written about 1583, in which he supported the claims of the drama based on classical models against the looser romantic type, which popular poets and actor-playwrights were rapidly introducing. But the genius of Marlowe and of Shakespeare was on the side of romanticism, and the three Unities vanished with the Chorus and the Messenger and the other paraphernalia of strict Senecan doctrine. With the discarding of formalism arose the danger that the true limits of stage effectiveness might be forgotten. The Unities of Time and Place were little loss, but unless Unity of Action or something equivalent were retained the result

/1 The *Apologie for Poetrie* was first published in 1595. The most accessible edition is that by Prof. Arber, in his series of English Reprints (1868).

would be chaos rather than drama. There are too many Elizabethan plays, in fact, which have very little dramatic unity at all. They are mere stories, romances, acted instead of read. But the conditions of unity in a story and in a play are not the same. A story permits of pauses, of turnings back, of the application of thought to win its secret. But in a play you are hurried on, the imagination moves rapidly from event to event, the links of unity must be transparent and obvious. It is the characteristic defect of the Elizabethan dramatist to neglect this distinction; immeasurably superior in all merely literary graces to the Sardous and the Ibsens of our day, in stagecraft, in the knowledge of stage effectiveness, he is as a child among them. Even Shakespeare

is not exempt from this criticism. A modern manager producing *King Lear* must needs omit most of the Edgar story, and the little that is left only weakens the total impression of the play. A patient analysis in the study may find a unity by discovering that the same ethical idea is illustrated in the house of Gloucester and in the house of Lear; but in the theatre, where the unity must present itself, not be sought, such a process would be scarcely possible. I do not for a moment mean that Shakespeare was blind to the problem of unity. A comparison of two successive plays -- deliberate pendants, one may well think -- would at once dispel such an idea. In *The Winter's Tale* all the three Unities are deliberately and wildly outraged; in *The Tempest* they are most scrupulously observed. It is a confession of literary faith, the poet declares at once his power to handle and his will to disregard the formalities of classicism.

The objections that may be urged against *King Lear* do not apply to *Macbeth*. Here more than elsewhere Shakespeare has escaped the pitfalls of romanticism; here, not by direct imitation, but by the sympathy of genius, he has approached most nearly to the simplicity, the large sweep, of Aeschylus. Analysis of the play will show that a unity of impression is produced in it in no less than four ways.

In the first place, there is unity of action in the strictest sense. The whole interest is concentrated in the rise and

fall of Macbeth and his wife. The episodes are few and slight, and can everywhere be shown to be necessary, by way of relief or contrast, to the emotions appealed to by the central story. Except in the tragedies, this particular kind of unity is rare with Shakespeare. Some of the comedies present as many as four or five stories, distinct threads of interest, woven together with consummate skill. Doubtless the poet felt that the intenser, more passionate feelings aroused in tragedy would not bear such rivalry. They cannot be laid down and taken up again with the change of scene.

Secondly, there is unity of philosophic idea. This is to be found in nearly every play; each is the medium of some great thought, some utterance of the poet's mind on deep questions, on love or kingship or character, or on the ultimate nature of the government of the world. And in the light of this every character, every fragment of the plot must be read in order to grasp its full meaning. In *Macbeth* the central idea or theme appears to me to be this. A noble character, noble alike in potentiality and fruition, may yet be completely overmastered by mysterious, inexplicable

temptation; and if he be once subdued a curse not to be forgone is for ever upon him. Temptation begets sin, and sin yet further sin, and this again punishment sure and inexorable. The illustration of this central idea is to be found in the rise and fall of Lord and Lady Macbeth. To them temptation comes in the guise of ambition, the subtlest form in which it can approach high souls. Of the supernatural setting in which it is exhibited there will be more to say hereafter; for the present note that once the murder of Duncan is committed there is never any hope of regress -- sin leads to sin with remorseless fatality, until the end is utter ruin of the moral sense or even of reason itself; so that death comes almost as a relief, though it be a miserable death, without hope of repentance. Such a story is a proper theme for tragedy, because it depicts strong human natures battling with and overcome by destiny; had they been weak natures the disproportion between the forces would have been too

great, and we should have had pathos and not tragedy. Starting from this central idea, the power of Shakespeare's treatment of it is most clearly manifest in the contrasted results of similar circumstances on two characters of different mould and fibre -- one that of a man, the other of a woman; one realizing itself in action, the other in thought. When first Macbeth comes before us it is as a mighty warrior -- he is spoken of as "valour's minion", "Bellona's bridegroom, lapp'd in proof"; by performing prodigies of personal valour he has saved the country on one day from a civil and an alien foe. This is the noble side of him; away from the battlefield his greatness is gone, he sinks to the level of quite common men. Lady Macbeth herself expresses this in a passage which has been misunderstood:

> Yet do I fear thy nature;
> It is too full o' the milk of human kindness
> To catch the nearest way.

"The milk of human kindness" -- that is clearly not 'a tender nature', of which Macbeth never shows a trace, but rather 'the commonplace ordinary qualities and tendencies of humankind'./1 As for Lady Macbeth, it is not easy to accept the traditional stage view of her, originated probably by Mrs. Pritchard, as a sheer human monster, and the evil genius of her husband's soul. Hers is both a subtler and a nobler nature than his. Living a woman's solitary life, she has turned her thoughts inward; she, too, is a conqueror and has won her triumphs, not in war, but in the training of her in-

tellect and the subjugation of her will. And withal, she is a very woman still:

> I have given suck, and know
> How tender 't is to love the babe that milks me;

and

> Had he not resembled
> My father as he slept, I had done 't;

and that despairing cry of horror: "Yet who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him". Macbeth addresses her in language of love, and she too is

/1 Cf. note ad loc., and Moulton's Shakespeare as a Dramatic Artist.

wrapped up in him. Her immediate impulse to crime is ambition for her husband rather than herself, and in the banquet scene she stifles agonies of remorse to save him from blunders.

Thus the antithesis between the two is that between the practical life and the intellectual, and the effects of this difference are everywhere apparent. Macbeth is bold and resolute in the moment of action; he can kill a king, and he has a curious gift of ready speech throughout, which avails him to answer unwelcome questions. But when there is nothing to be actually done he is devoid of self-control; he cannot wait nor stand still; he becomes a prey to countless terrible imaginings; he is wildly superstitious. In all this Lady Macbeth is the exact converse; she has banished all superstition from her soul; she is strong enough of will to quell her husband's cowardly fears; she can scheme and plot, but she cannot act; she must leave the actual doing of the deadly deed to Macbeth; at the moment of discovery she faints.

The emotional effects of their crime are totally different on the pair. In Macbeth it is purely fear; there is no word of sorrow or sense of sin, only a base dread lest he should be found out and lose what he played for; if the fatal blow

> Might be the be-all and the end-all here,
> But here upon this bank and shoal of time,

he is willing to "jump the life to come". In time this fear assumes terrible proportions; it drives him to new murders; he slaughters Banquo, he slaughters the family of Macduff; finally he becomes a craven and bloody tyrant; even his old

love for his wife is swallowed up in selfishness; when her death is told him he cannot stay to mourn: "She should have died hereafter". Only in the last hour of battle does he for one moment recover something of his old brave spirit. With Lady Macbeth the curse works itself out, not in fear but remorse; it impels her husband to fresh deeds of blood: she has no hand in any murder but the first. But her sin is ever present to her: awake or dreaming she can think of

nothing but that awful night, and the stain upon her hand and soul. At last her overtasked brain breaks down; we witness her mental agony in the sleep-walking scene: "Here's the smell of the blood still: all the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand: oh! oh! oh!" And then she dies, a voluntary and most wretched death.

The other personages of the play are completely subordinate to the two central figures. Either they are mechanical, necessary to the incidents and episodes by which the plot moves on, such as Ross and Siward; or else they serve to intensify by character-contrast our conception of Macbeth's nature. It is noticeable that Lady Macbeth in this respect, as in others, is entirely isolated. But Macbeth sins both as subject and as lord; in the one relation Banquo and Macduff, in the other Duncan and Malcolm are set over against him. These are loyal, he is treacherous; these are king-like, he is a tyrant.

The witches, of course, come under another category. I take it that, wherever Shakespeare introduces the supernatural, he does so with a definite purpose; it is symbolical, pointing the fact that here, just here, we come upon one of those ultimate mysteries, which meet us everywhere when we scratch the surface of things. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, this is the meaning of the fairies; love is a mystery -- "Love blows as the wind blows: love blows into the heart", sings the Nile boatman, according to Mr. Henley; it is indeed but the highest form of that primal mystery of attraction that pervades all matter and all spirit, and binds man to his god. In *The Tempest*, the magic of Prospero typifies the mystery of an overruling providence; and here Shakespeare has become his own commentator, for while this theme occupies the main plot, the under-plot of Miranda and Ferdinand contains the mystery of love; that of Caliban and the drunken sailors the mystery of intoxication. Coming back to *Macbeth*, the supernatural character of the weird sisters denotes the mystery involved in temptation; the mystery, that is, of the existence of evil. They do not tempt Macbeth; he was fallen before he met them; that is brought

out clearly enough/1; they are only personifications of the real internal tempting motives. And, since in the mystery of evil is included the punishment of sin, as well as its origin, so the sisters appear to Macbeth a second time, to ensure his destruction by their deceitful promises.

We come now to a third kind of unity, of which again Shakespeare makes frequent use, but which consists in something so subtle and impalpable that it often defies analysis, and needs to be felt rather than demonstrated. Every reader must be aware that there belongs to each play an indefinable something, a note, a fragrance, a temperament, which distinguishes it from any and every other. We might call this unity of soul, and the last unity of mind, borrowing a hint from Mr. Pater, who speaks of "unity of atmosphere here, as there of design -- soul securing colour (or perfume, might we say?) as mind secures form, the latter being essentially finite, the former vague and infinite, as the influence of a living person is practically infinite_" So in *Macbeth* a thousand delicate touches serve to produce a sense of weird horror, rising to a height in the terrors of that unspeakable midnight murder.

Consider first how the key-note of the whole play is given by the appearance of the weird sisters amongst thunder and lightning in the first scene; then mark the awful chill that settles on us as we pass with the doomed Duncan to the gate of that castle where Lady Macbeth waits to welcome him.

> This castle hath a pleasant seat; the air
> Nimbly and sweetly recommends itself
> Unto our gentle senses.

The irony of this only increases our forebodings, and the "guest of summer, the temple-haunting martlet" that nests upon the wall, gives an added touch of tragedy. Then night falls, a night fit for the deed to be done. It is pitch dark. "There's husbandry in heaven; their candles are all out", says Banquo. Evil things are abroad.

/1 i. 7. 48-51 must refer to some period before the opening of the play; and iii. 1. 75 also gives a hint of Macbeth's past life.

> The night has been unruly: where we lay
> Our chimneys were blown down, and, as they say,
> Lamentings heard i' the air, strange screams of death,
> And prophesying with accents terrible

Of dire combustion and confused events
New hatch'd to the woeful time: the obscure bird
Clamour'd the live-long night; some say, the earth
Was feverous and did shake.

Even as the guilty pair start about the preparations for their sin, the vaulted hall is lit by lightning and re-echoes with thunder; with them we "hear the owl shriek and the cricket cry". Innocent men are visited by strange thoughts and dreams.

There 's one did laugh in 's sleep and one cried 'Murder';
That they did wake each other; I stood and heard them;
But they did say their prayers, and address'd them
Again to sleep.

Even such a nobly-strung soul as Banquo's is smitten with a strange sense of moral weakness and shrinking from the battle with temptation.

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!

The most awful touch of all is that knocking of some unknown comer at the gate, which calls our minds, strained by the intensity of the situation almost into sympathy with the crime, back to the frightful realities of fact; and this effect is grimly enhanced by the drunken porter, whose fumbling for his keys and swearing at the disturbers of his rest delays for some moments more the imminent discovery. By such delicate workmanship of detail the poet contrives to produce an impression of weirdness, of something uncanny, which signalizes the play as a whole, and it is just in this that the so-called aesthetic unity consists. One might well trace the sources of this impression through the banqueting and sleep-walking scenes, but it is more worth while to point out how

the general effect is intensified by comparison with the one scene in England, with its idyllic picture of the good King Edward the Confessor curing his subjects of their diseases. Shakespeare uses freely what Mr. Ruskin regards as the device of a second-rate poet, the "pathetic fallacy" -- that is, he attributes to the inanimate things of nature a sympathy with the moods and passions of men. It is hard to under-stand Mr. Ruskin's objection; the 'pathetic fallacy' is but a

weaker modern form of the view of nature on which most of Greek religion was based, and it is surely both a proper and a universal conception for poetry. Coleridge has given the rationale of it in these lines: --

> Only that film, which fluttered on the grate,
> Still flutters there, the sole unquiet thing.
> Methinks, its motion in this hush of nature
> Gives it dim sympathies with me who live,
> Making it a companionable form,
> Whose puny flaps and freaks the idling Spirit
> By its own moods interprets, everywhere
> Echo or mirror seeking of itself,
> And makes a toy of Thought./1

Fourthly, and finally, there is in *Macbeth* a special and peculiar unity of structure. The play moves forward with an absolute regularity; it is almost architectural in its rise and fall, in the balance of its parts. The plot is a complex one; it has an ebb and flow, a complication and a resolution, to use technical terms. That is to say, the fortunes of Macbeth swoop up to a crisis or turning-point; and thence down again to a catastrophe. The catastrophe of course closes the play; the crisis, as so often with Shakespeare, comes in its exact centre, in the middle of the middle act, with the escape of Fleance. Hitherto, Macbeth's path has been gilded with success; now the epoch of failure begins. And the parallelisms and correspondences throughout are remarkable. Each act has a definite subject: the Temptation; the First, Second, and Third Crimes; the Retribution. Three accidents,

__ Frost at Midnight, in Sibylline Leaves.

if we may so call them, help Macbeth in the first half of the play: the visit of Duncan to Inverness, his own impulsive murder of the grooms, the flight of Malcolm and Donalbain. And in the second half, three accidents help to bring about his ruin: the escape of Fleance, the false prophecy of the witches, the escape of Macduff. Malcolm and Macduff at the end answer to Duncan and Banquo at the beginning. A meeting with the witches heralds both rise and fall. Finally, each of the Crimes is represented in the Retribution. Malcolm, the son of Duncan, and Macduff, whose wife and child he slew, conquer Macbeth; Fleance begets a race that shall reign in his stead.

A few words are necessary on the style, the technique of the play. As has been said, we have probably only a mutilated

stage version before us; and this must account for the ruggedness, the broken lines here and there. The manner of writing is the manner of almost all Shakespeare's great tragedies. The perfect proportion between the thing said and the words it is said in, which is so noticeable in the middle comedies, has disappeared; the thought has become too full, too intense for the expression. Hence these closely-packed pregnant lines, into which the poet seems often to have put more than language will endure, whose exact meaning is often so elusive, so incapable of analysis. Yet this enigmatic speech, with its undersenses and its ironies, is after all appropriate to the half-lights, the elemental problems of the theme which it sets forth. To come to technicalities, the rhythm and metre of *Macbeth* is that of Shakespeare's later work, though not the latest./1 The number of feminine endings, the proportion of overflow to end-stopped lines sufficiently show this. There is a small number of light endings. Prose is used to produce special effects in the sleep-walking scene, and in two other scenes. There is a larger proportion of rhyme than we might expect in a play of so late a date, but this fact may be easily explained. The witches, as supernatural beings, speak appro-

/1 See the Essay on Metre.

priately in a rhyming metre. The other rhyming lines are mostly couplets coming at the ends of scenes or speeches. There is good reason to believe that, in a stage version, these may be due to the natural desire of the actor for an effective 'curtain'.