THE MORAL AND POLITICAL WORLDS OF *MACBETH*

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THE MORAL AND POLITICAL WORLDS OF *MACBETH*

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, Lamia Kabal, certify that

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ABSTRACT

The Moral and Political Worlds of *Macbeth*

Unlike Shakespeare's greatest villains such as Richard III and Iago, Macbeth is not really comfortable in his role as murderer and usurper thanks to his acute awareness that he is acting against the moral and political values which underpin the social fabric. The aim of this thesis is to explore the ways in which Macbeth falls afoul of the commonly accepted ethical and political norms in the discourse of the Renaissance era and finds himself in the role of a would-be "Machiavel". He puts 'words' and his imagination into use to seize power and later to maintain his status as king of Scotland. Macbeth emerges as a great exemplar of how desire for political power silences the claims of conscience.

ÖZET

Macbeth'in Ahlaki ve Politik Dünyası

Shakespeare'in Richard III ve Iago gibi kötücül karakterlerinin aksine Macbeth, sosyal dokunun temelini oluşturan ahlaki ve politik değerlere uygun davranmadığının farkındadır ve bu nedenle üstlendiği katil ve 'meşru' otoriteyi zorla ele geçiren kimse rolünden rahatsızlık duymaktadır. Bu tezin amacı, Macbeth'in Rönesans çağı söyleminde çoğunlukça kabul edilen ahlaki ve politik normlara ters düşerek kendisini (uygun olmadığı) bir "Machiavel" rölünde buluşunu incelemektedir. Gücü ele geçirmek ve daha sonra İskoçya kralı olarak statüsünü koruyabilmek için 'kelimeleri' ve hayal gücünü devreye sokan Macbeth, politik güç arzusunun vicdanı bastırışının mükemmel bir örneğidir.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: *MACBETH* IN CONTEXT

This thesis, without forgetting that the moral and political worlds of *Macbeth* often overlap, attempts to measure its protagonist, its eponymous villain -hero- against both moral and ethical criteria in the personal and public spheres. It also explores how he attempts to consolidate the political power he has seized, while at the same time being obsessed with the image he projects to the public. We will also see how in the process he acts the part of a consummate hypocrite.

The first chapter of this thesis is an attempt to view Macbeth and his choices from the perspective of ethics and morality. While viewing Macbeth from the vantage point of morality and ethics, we will examine the workings of his ‘moralizing’ imagination which constitutes a distinctive feature of his personality, and his acute awareness that he must conceal his sense of guilt and shame both from himself and from the world in order to project the image of a man who has a “conscience” –in his own eyes as well as in the public eye. Hence, a discussion of *Macbeth* leads us to explore the ways in which the phenomenon of conscience was experienced in the Renaissance world which encouraged men to *imagine* their moral choices: Men were expected to experience and imagine their conscience as something exposed to public view.

The second chapter, dwelling on the role of practical politics in the play, views Macbeth from the vantage point of Machiavelli’s political precepts as well as Hobbes’ understanding of the body politics. This chapter, as opposed to traditional readings which tend to attribute Macbeth’s failure to his ‘illegitimate’ status as a ruler, attempts to see Macbeth’s ultimate fall as an outcome of his failure to embody the political characteristics that are necessary to maintain political power.

Furthermore, Macbeth's initial murder to seize power and the faulty strategy he pursues to maintain that authority lay bare the fragility of political power and reflect the ambivalence and paradoxes inherent at the heart of 'sovereign power'.

Macbeth is not only a gross violator of the moral values current in the West since the classical era but also fails as a 'prince' according to Machiavelli's paradigm for practical politics. Moreover, destroying the established and widely shared political view embodied in the 'anointed' king, Macbeth brings about, in Macduff's words, 'the masterpiece of confusion': "Confusion now hath made his masterpiece" (Shakespeare, 1992, 2.3.40). Chaos, strife, conflict and self-destructiveness that prevail in *Macbeth* in the aftermath of King Duncan's murder prophetically mirror how Thomas Hobbes viewed England later during that same century when a king, Charles I, was executed.

In short, this thesis attempts to explore how Macbeth fails on all counts due to the fact that his killings become automatic and know no end, that he ruins Scotland in more ways than one during his brutally authoritarian reign, while becoming desensitized to blood and murderous deeds, losing whatever 'conscience' and moral sense he might have had - including his non-reaction to his wife's death.

Once he is faced with the possibility of future kingship, Macbeth's self is divided into two – between his present state that requires him to comply with the set of values upheld by society at large and the infinite future possibilities that have been offered to him by the prophesy. Macbeth's experience of guilt, whether sincere or illusory, constitutes the core of the play as he strives to find a path that would both contain the witches' prophesy and his seeming decency, namely, the image he projects to the outside world. Macbeth, thanks to what Harold Bloom calls his 'proleptic imagination', is able to anticipate the outcome of his bloody actions before

he commits them. Yet, he would hide his evil deeds in a ‘cloak’ of words, both from the world and from himself – if he could.

Macbeth was probably written in 1605 or 1606, a short time after James VI of Scotland ascended the throne of England as James I. It is generally supposed that the play was first performed before James I and his royal guest, King Christian IV of Denmark, during his visit to England. Hence, the first performance must have taken place at the Great Hall of Hampton Court, on August 7th, 1606. Shakespeare might have departed from the pseudo-historical account of Holinshed’s *Chronicles of England, Scotland, Ireland* on which *Macbeth* was loosely based due to the presence of King Christian IV of Denmark in the audience: While in Holinshed’s account it is said that the war took place between Scotland and Denmark, in Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* the same war takes place between Scotland and Norway.

Quite a few critics claim that the play was written with James’s tastes in mind since the play seems to be designed to aim at several of James’s ‘obsessive’ interests such as his interest in his native country Scotland and its past, and especially his pride in his own lineage. Shakespeare exhibits the genealogical tree of the Stuart family on the stage, according to the historico-mythical notion cultivated by James I who, after having sought for inspiration in Holinshed’s Chronicles, claimed to be a descendant of Banquo. Famously, in the first scene of Act IV, when the second encounter of Macbeth with the witches takes place, a procession of eight phantasmal kings is conjured up by the witches in answer to Macbeth’s question about Banquo’s offspring, a show akin to the Jacobean masque. The last king holds up a mirror in which the line of Banquo is reflected, and Shakespeare, very cunningly, made it a longer line still to reflect the image of James I, seated on his throne on the elevated platform strategically displayed during the performances of plays at court. This

symbolic scene suggests that the line of Banquo's descendants and by extension, of James I, would stretch out *ad infinitum* into the future as kings. Thus, the unbroken line of the Stuarts is emphasized as the Stuart monarchs pass before the stupefied gaze of Macbeth who says: "What, will the line stretch out to th' crack of doom?" (4.1.132). Another powerful interest of James was witchcraft and witches, a subject James I had written on 'learnedly'. As T.J.B. Spencer and Stanley Wells note, in spite of Holinshed's description of the three women as "goddesses…nymphs or fairies", Shakespeare represents them as hags with equivocal genders, "traditional Scottish witches with withered skin, beards, and a native love of mischief" (1967, p. 39). Another point that James I was interested in lies at the heart of the play: The notion of the divine right of kings and their legitimate right to rule. James I addresses the question of the divine right of kings in his *Basilikon Doron* (1599) and *The True Law of Free Monarchies* (1598). In contrast to 'contractarian' views made famous by Hobbes and Locke, he was a firm believer in the divine ordination of kinship. The connection between divinity and kingly status was a subject that James I was deeply concerned about. Duncan, Malcolm and Edward the Confessor stand as embodiments of divine kingship whereas Macbeth is referred to as the usurper, the tyrant who interrupts the continuous line of kingship and 'natural' earthly order that takes its power from God. The episode of Edward's touching for the king's 'evil' (scrofula) can be linked to James' notion of royal virtue and 'the king becoming graces': "By the date of the play, James had begun, after some hesitation, to 'touch for the King's evil'" (Wells & Spencer, 1967, p. 39). Another reason to see *Macbeth* as particularly related to James' concerns about divine kingship is the allusion to 'equivocators'. The Jesuit Superior in England, Father Henry Garnet, was tried in March 1606 for treason because of his involvement in the gunpowder plot to blow up the king in

Parliament on November 1605. As Wells and Spencer note, “Garnet’s trial had caused great detestation because, when he was discovered in lies told to his examiners, he alleged that he had done so in accordance with the doctrine of equivocation” (p. 40). The doctrine of equivocation allowed the faithful to say one thing while holding (but not uttering) their mental reservations. In *Macbeth*, the Porter’s reference to “Faith, here is an equivocator that could swear in both scales against either scale, who committed treason enough for God’s sake, yet could not equivocate to heaven” (2.3.8-11) is generally thought to be a direct allusion to this event. The theological and political scandal of Garnet’s trial must have contributed to the leitmotif of equivocation which can be seen as one of the fundamental preoccupations of the play: ‘Equivocation’, ‘double sense’, and ‘the swearing and lying’ that Macduff refers to in Act 4 Scene 2 and which is repeated like a mantra by the witches (“fair is foul, and foul is fair”) are considered to be the main mode of operation of evil forces in *Macbeth.*

Though it is possible to read the play as an affirmation of the legitimate right of succession of James I or as a compliment to the king, the exploration of the moral and political worlds of *Macbeth*, which will form the scope of Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 respectively, inevitably leads us to read *Macbeth* against traditional readings which seem to consider the play as an ideological legitimization of an existing social and political order. Rather, *Macbeth*, famous for being full of ‘equivocations’, lays bare the equivocal and paradoxical nature of politico-moral truths which it seems to ratify at first glance. First of all, as Malcolm’s testing of Macduff in Act 4 Scene 3 shows, ‘equivocation’ is not only employed by ‘evil’ forces –witches or proprietors of a metaphysical evil force –but also by Malcolm, the legitimate heir to the throne. Moreover, “James I’s ideology of Absolutism”, Alan Sinfield says, “…represented

the English state as a pyramid, any disturbance of which would produce general disaster. … This system was said to be 'natural' and ordained by 'God'; it was 'good', and disruptions of it were 'evil'" (1992, p. 96). Providing a cultural materialist reading, Sinfield further claims that, while reading *Macbeth*, we should make a clearer distinction between the violence which the state considers legitimate and that which it does not (p. 95). Namely, while the state can accommodate Macbeth the warrior who "unseamed him [Macdonwald] from the nave to th' chops/ And fixed his head upon our battlements" (1.2.24-25), the murders of Lady Macduff and her son is seen as illegitimate and evil. Moreover, the play ends with a striking parallel: Macduff, Macbeth's main foil in the play with his loyalty to Malcolm who is the legitimate heir to the throne, seems to restore order by killing Macbeth. However, he might as well turn out to be a replication of Macbeth since Macbeth's initial representation in the play was also marked with 'loyalty' and 'bravery', which were the qualities he employed to serve his 'legitimate' king Duncan. Therefore, rather than validating a fixed set of values, it can be suggested that *Macbeth* ends with a 'formal' closure, leading us to question the validity of the 'seemingly' non-contradictory principles pertaining to politico-moral truths, leading us to question the opposition between what is 'fair' and what is 'foul'.

Though Macbeth can be considered to be an unpromising tragic figure and an outright criminal whose end cannot be regarded as the outcome of an external disaster beyond his control – the original meaning of 'dis – aster' was 'under the malign influence of the stars' –Shakespeare seems to demand that we make an attempt at least to understand him. As opposed to Aristotle who declared that tragedy involves unmerited misfortune, Shakespeare, over the course of his career, grants his protagonists agency and control over their own lives. Rather than seeing a blameless

and innocent person crushed by outside forces, we see that Shakespeare locates the cause of disaster in his characters who bring the catastrophe on themselves. Macbeth is clearly responsible for setting in motion the forces that destroy him. Linda Woodbridge (2003) claims that no matter how guilty the characters seem to be of their own predicaments, Shakespeare's 'guilty' tragic heroes might be considered to serve a scapegoating function. A thinking audience is left uneasy even though 'an offending protagonist' is dead:

> Do Shakespeare's 'guilty' tragic heroes serve some scapegoat function? It is true that Scotland's woes are pronounced cured upon the death of the Macbeths. But overemphasis on guilt might be distorting: The killing of a scapegoat often, in Shakespeare, cures evils much more extensive than can be accounted for any flaw in the scapegoated protagonist himself. Coriolanus exacerbates but does not solely cause Rome's class tensions, yet when he is banished, tensions cease, in 'a happier and more timely come / Than when these fellows ran about the streets, / Crying confusion' (4.6.29-41). At the end of a tragedy or a history play with a 'tragic ending', society's troubles are judged to be cured now that an offending protagonist is dead, as happens in *Macbeth*, *Coriolanus*, and *Richard III*; but a thinking audience is often left uneasy by this blaming of the victim. These plays often leave the impression that the troubles temporarily cured by sacrificing a scapegoat are deeply rooted in their society, and will occur. (p. 215)

Perhaps the melancholy recognition that the 'cured' troubles will recur and the 'sickness' that had taken hold of a country will have a relapse in the long run might explain the sympathy felt for even the most offending of villains, like Macbeth. He and Lady Macbeth are both murderers yet perhaps also victims, both subjects and yet objects of the catastrophe they give rise to. Much as the kingdom has been cleansed of the 'evil' that infected it by Malcolm, the 'true' king who re-establishes rule and order, there is always the possibility that disorder might once again supplant order, creating new 'criminals' who decide to challenge that order. The play ultimately makes us aware of much more is at stake than the elimination of what Malcolm describes as the "butcher and his fiend-like queen" (5.9.87). *Macbeth,* like other

tragedies or history plays by Shakespeare, is “much more than the straight record of the defeat of the evil one by the instruments of ‘powers’” (Ludowyk, 1974, p. 255). “In Macbeth’s sensitiveness to the evil in which he is caught”, Ludowyk suggests, “in Lady Macbeth’s process of education, in which she learned that a little water does not clear her of this deed, is to be found the play’s real significance” (p. 255).

While talking about the ‘influences’ which might have contributed to the play, we cannot possibly disregard the influence of Seneca which can be seen most clearly in Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* of 1586. Seneca is considered to be crucial for Shakespeare, who may well have read his plays in Latin at the Stratford grammar school. As T.S. Elliot states, “No author exercised a wider or deeper influence upon the Elizabethan mind or upon the Elizabethan form of tragedy than did Seneca” (as cited in Arkins, 1995, p. 1). Seneca, different from his Greek predecessors whose works served as material for his own plays, wrote ‘bloodthirsty’ plots as well as adding sinister and supernatural elements and images of violence to the plot. Shakespeare brings Seneca’s sensational elements to the stage: “Queen Margaret stabbing a child to death in *Henry VI Part Two*, Gloucester’s two eyes being gouged out with the nauseating comment ‘Out, vile jelly!’ (*King Lear*, 2.7.86), Macbeth’s bleeding severed head stuck on a pole” (Woodbridge, 2003, p. 215).

Seneca’s pessimistic tragedies, describing a world permeated with corruption, crime and radical evil, serve as an oblique commentary on the outrages of Nero’s court. The ghost calling for revenge, vaulting ambition, crime, political intrigue, the existence of the supernatural and witchcraft are the general Senecan features that can be found in Shakespeare’s plays –none more so than in *Macbeth*. Charles and Michelle Martindale (1990) sum up other features of Seneca that can be considered to be salient in *Macbeth*:

> There are a number of features in *Macbeth* - the heated rhetoric, the brooding sense of evil, the preoccupation with power, the obsessive introspection, the claustrophobic images of cosmic destruction - which recall Seneca's manner and interest, together with an unusually high number of passages which seem to derive from his plays. (p. 26)

As Brian Arkins (1995) suggests, in addition to *Phaedra*, "the Senecan play that most influences Macbeth is *Hercules Furen*" (p. 7). As well as its plot imbued with images of horror, violence, bloodshed and brutality which are akin to *Macbeth*, a number of passages in *Macbeth* recall those in *Hercules Furens*. After the murder of Duncan, Lady Macbeth and Macbeth vainly hope to cleanse their blood-stained hands, which echoes Hercules' outcry after he has killed his children in *Hercules Furen*:

> Where can I hide myself, or where can I be buried?
> What Tanais or Nile or turbulent Tigris
> in Persia, or what wild barbarian Rhine,
> or Tagus, flowing full with Spanish gold,
> could ever wash my hand? If icy Maeotis
> poured its frozen waters over me,
> and all the ocean ran across my hands,
> still my guilt sticks deep. Sinner, where can you run? (Seneca, trans. 2010, 1323-1330)

Macbeth's famous soliloquy at the end of the play where he reflects on a life in tatters resonates with Hercules' words which convey his sense of despair and desolation when he faces a life in ruins:

> There is no reason I should linger out my life
> delaying this awful day. I have lost everything:
> mind, arms, fame, wife, children, hands,
> and even madness. Nobody could cure
> a heart so tainted: sin must be healed by death. (1258-1262)

Macbeth too admits that his life is beginning to wither and fall away, and there is no reason for him to live any longer. He has to carry on a course of life "which the poor

heart would fain deny, and dare not" (5.3.22). Like Hercules who is aware of his "polluted mind", Macbeth, deeply aware of his degeneration, knows that he has lost his honour, love, obedience and troops of friends and has to content himself with "mouth-honour" and "curses, not loud, but deep" (5.3.21):

> 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 honour, love, obedience, troops of friends,
> I must not look to have ...(5.3.26-30)

Macbeth's assertion in Act 1 Scene 7 that the crime ultimately comes back upon its author echoes Theseus' dictum in *Hercules Furens*: "Each soul suffers what he or she has done / Sins rebound upon the sinner, punishments fit the crime" (735-736).

Apart from the resemblances the reader can detect between *Macbeth* and Seneca's tragedies, Seneca's non-fictional writings – particularly those he wrote as a commentary on Nero's rule - bear striking similarities to Shakespeare's characterization of Macbeth. Addressing Nero, Seneca says that he has decided to write about 'clemency' so that "I might serve, so to speak, as a mirror for you, to show you to yourself as you are about to gain the greatest of all pleasures" (trans. 2010, p. 146). His aim is to provide him with a "full rounded view of your own good conscience" (p. 146).

Seneca describes a cruel king –like Macbeth- who fears not only gods but also "men as witnesses and avengers of his deeds". A man who has to use "fresh crimes to ward off the consequences of the old ones" is the unhappiest man on earth inasmuch as he now 'must' be evil:

> No defendant is more miserable and anxious than such a man: he fears gods and men as witnesses and avengers of his deeds, yet he reaches the point where he's not free to change his behavior. For among all of cruelty's other bad features, this is surely the worst: you can't retrace your steps for the better but have got to keep at it, using fresh crimes to ward off the

> consequences of your old ones. Yet what could be unhappier than the man who now must be evil? (p. 156)

What Macbeth is initially afraid of is to confront the image of a man whose "conscience is full of crimes and torture", and who "often fears death, but more often hopes for it". Holding a mirror to Nero, Seneca tries to give a truthful image of him and his description prophetically provides a mirror in which we can also see the image of Macbeth:

> What a pitiable wretch—in his own eyes, at any rate! For it would be unspeakable for anyone else to pity a man who uses murder and robbery as instruments of his power, who must regard everything with suspicion, at home and abroad, taking refuge in arms because he fears arms, trusting neither in friends' loyalty nor children's devotion. When he has looked around at what he has done and what he intends to do and has laid bare a conscience full of crimes and torture, he often fears death but more often hopes for it, being more loathsome in his own eyes than he is to those who serve him. (p. 159)

Perhaps the living experience of the play in which Macbeths are ultimately left in desolation and become more loathsome in their own eyes in the process as well as the disturbing nature of the 'formal' closure is the real significance of *Macbeth.* It would be meaningful to Seneca and it is still meaningful today.

CHAPTER 2

MACBETH'S MORAL SENSE AND MORALIZING IMAGINATION

This chapter will attempt to view Macbeth and his choices from the perspective of ethics and morality- both private and public. While viewing Macbeth's actions from the point of ethics, we will inevitably examine his choices from the perspective of his *ethos* (character). This will lead us to explore the frequently brought up proposition that his choices – at least his decision to murder king Duncan—are against his *conscience.* Therefore, this chapter will also be looking at the ways the notion of 'conscience' was understood and experienced during the Renaissance era and how Macbeth, while acting the part of a consummate hypocrite, is consumed by a sense of shameful exposure.

The way Macbeth's moralizing imagination pictures the aftermath of Duncan's murder is in line with the notion of 'conscience' that was current in the Renaissance. Exploring how early modern men viewed and experienced 'conscience' entails us to look at Roman authors who were influential in giving verbal form to conscience in early modern thought. Though conscience is often thought to be Christian in its origins, Latin *conscienta* was already a flourishing concept in Roman persuasive oratory and legal pleading well before the birth of Christ. The idea of conscience influential today actually owes much to our common pagan inheritance, among them, "to Roman authors, particularly Cicero and Seneca, in whose writings the term 'conscience' [*conscienta*] appears more often than in the corpuses of any other non-Christian author in antiquity (seventy-seven times in Cicero, forty-nine times in the younger Seneca)" (Ojakangas, 2013, p. 36). In *Pro Cluentio*, Cicero asserts that the conscience (*conscientia*) is "received from immortal gods, is implanted in the mind, is inalienable, and the best counsellor of all (*optimorum*

consiliorum)” (as cited in Ojakangas, p. 36). In *De legibus* he maintains that the torments of conscience (*angore conscientiae*) bear witness to natural law (lex naturalis) and natural justice (ius naturalis). Analogously, Seneca holds that wrongdoers cannot escape punishment, because nature itself punishes them by the whip of conscience (*mala facinora conscientia flagellari*), whilst the fear of this same punishment is additional proof for the existence of natural law (as cited in Ojakangas, p. 36).

It was the Roman conception of ‘conscience’ that gave texture and imagery – in particular, judicial metaphors such as conscience as a standing court within us, witness to our behavior, prosecutor and judge, external arbiter – to later conceptions of conscience. “The foundation of classical conscience” Strohm (2011) says, “was public or social opinion. People at odds with public opinion or social consensus found themselves vulnerable to the accusations of conscience and to conscience’s pangs” (p. 6). “Conscience”, says Cicero in his *Pro Milo*, “is the principle theatre of virtue [*theatrum virtutu*], and one performs in that theatre for good or ill” (as cited in Strohm, 2011, p. 6).

Moreover, the role one’s conscience plays in the public sphere is emphasized in the ‘visible’ traits of conscience such as blushing, stammering, growing pale or displaying uncertainty (Strohm, p. 7). Therefore, *concienta* was a term that looked in two directions: Not only inward, that is, a private ethical discernment and inner quality which is inherent in the individual, but also outward: As in the Ciceronian understanding of *conscienta* –rather than being a ‘hidden’ faculty in man, whereby one derives the knowledge of a sense of right and wrong, but having to do with public opinion and shared values.

As opposed to the Christian understanding of conscience as the law of God written in the hearts of human beings and dictating us towards abstract moral law or conceived as something private to each soul, a form of self-knowledge that is shared only between God and the individual, classical writers understood 'conscience' as not only a form of self-knowledge, but also as a knowledge held together with another or others. "Conscience is knowledge of oneself", however, etymologically, conscience means *con* + *scienta*; "*scienta* as knowledge, but knowledge held *con*, or 'together with' or 'in common'" (Strohm, p. 10).

According to the classical view, *conscienta* was inevitably related to 'public expectation'. Hence, classical authors emphasized the importance of cultivating an 'external' scrutiny of one's soul. In this vein, 'conscience' was understood to be constituted as something "exterior to the self, an experience that is generated in conjunction with other men" (Tilmouth, 2011, p. 69). Seneca in his Eleventh Epistle, points out the importance of 'imagining' an exemplary and revered figure whose 'gaze' and authority will witness and question everything one does, thus keeping the soul on a virtuous path. Seneca bids Lucilius to "picture" someone as a positive moral pattern to follow so that he will feel his conduct is being evaluated:

> Hear and take to heart this useful and wholesome motto: "Cherish some man of high character and, keep him ever before your eyes, living as if here were *watching* you and ordering all your actions as if he beheld them." Such my dear Lucilius, is the counsel of Epicurus; he has quite properly given us a guardian and an attendant. We can get rid of most sins, if we have a *witness* who stands near us when we are likely to go wrong. The soul should have someone whom it can respect,—one by whose authority it may make even its inner shrine more hallowed. (trans. 1925, p. 65 emphasis added)

"Since solicitude prompts us to do all kinds of evil", Seneca claims in his Twenty-Fifth Epistle, it is good to imagine someone "whom you may regard as a witness to your thoughts" (p. 185). By living as "you would live under the eyes of some man,

always at your side," one can progress so far that "you may send away your attendant… Meantime, you are engaged in making of yourself the sort of person in whose company you would not dare to sin" (Seneca, trans. 1925, p. 185). Thus, imagining a person who scrutinizes and regulates our conduct assists one in turning his *own* self into that ideal image in whose presence one does not dare engage in offensive conduct. In other words, man will ultimately become his own watcher, one who shares his self-knowledge and encourages him to live up to that 'externalized' ideal of his own self.

As Christopher Tilmouth (2011) notes, Renaissance writers dealing with the question of conscience, like classical writers, advocated imagining an external judge of one's actions as a means of keeping to a virtuous life (p. 6). Here, public display of 'princely virtues' can be considered to be analogous to the notion of conscience conceived as a phenomenon that is to be displayed in the public eye. Renaissance conduct literature, in particular, highlighted the importance of cultivating both the essence and the 'appearance' of virtue and majesty not just to enforce moral values but, "in a more reciprocal sense, to make themselves agreeable to their observers" (p. 6). Princes were not only encouraged to display their 'virtues' but also their 'consciences'; therefore, they should cultivate their virtues and consciences both for themselves and for their 'public display-value'. Likewise, humanist discussions on the relationship between the prince and his subjects also focus on the deliberate parading of royal 'goodness' as a means to win honour and praise from the public: When Thomas Elyot issues his instructions to the tutors of young noblemen at the start of Book I of *Book Named the Governor,* he advises them to "commend those virtues they wish to inculcate, and to point out what honour, what love, what commodity can be gained by these virtues" (as cited in Skinner, 1978, p. 234). One

of the chief maxims Elyot enunciates is that "the most sure foundation of noble renown is a man of such virtues and qualities as he desires to be *openly published*" (as cited in Skinner, p. 235 emphasis added).

This encouragement, however, was not merely a strategy to dictate or inspire their subjects towards moral behavior or to make themselves more 'agreeable' to their subjects. It was an inevitable reality inasmuch as their very political standing 'exposed' them to the public eye. As Giovanni Pontano quotes from *Hamlet* in his "On the Prince", a prince is "th'observ'd of all observers" (trans. 1997, p. 78).

The openness and exposure of royal 'conscience' that is in full view of everyone is also emphasized in James I's writings. Citizens' 'penetrating gaze' brings about the necessity of fashioning oneself outwardly and construing their inner moral judgment in accordance with public values and expectations. James I, in his *Basilikon Doron* (1599) that he wrote as a gift to his eldest son, points out the importance of fashioning a positive moral image inasmuch as "a king is as one set on a stage, whose smallest actions and gestures, all the people gazingly doe behold":

> Kings being publike persons, by reason of their office and authority, are as it were set (as it was said of old) vpon a publike stage, in the sight of all the people; where all the beholders eyes are attentiuely bent to looke and pry in the least circumstance of their secretest drifts: Which should make the Kings the more carefull not to harbour the secretest thoughts in their minde. (1996, p. 184)

In line with the mirror-for-princes genre, James I wrote *Basilikon Doron* to put forth a model, an external pattern for his son to follow. The mirror-for-princes (*principum specula*) tradition, to put broadly, aimed at creating images of kings for imitation and avoidance, which is also in accordance with the classical notion that one should act as if s/he were being scrutinized by the gaze of an external eye. 'Imagining' an ideal figure whereby one could regulate one's behavior resonates with the notion that a

king's 'virtues' are "openly published" and exposed to the public gaze. In the same vein, conscience, just like royal 'virtue' that needs to be displayed, was 'imagined' to be open and exposed to public view and inspection, rather than being a secret book whose details are legible only to God.

Accordingly, Shakespeare's presentation of conscience in *Macbeth* is very much in line with the Renaissance conceptions of conscience as an external arbiter that is to be internalized as the voice of conscience. Though he – or any other character in the play- never uses the word 'conscience', Macbeth strikes the reader as being acutely aware of both senses of the word –internal and external. Macbeth has a notion of conscience, not only 'outward' but also 'inward'. It seems that Macbeth, as we see in his soliloquies, has internalized the notion of conscience as put forth by classical thinkers and adapted by Renaissance writers. His mind is troubled with thoughts of the consequences of his wrong deeds. Macbeth is fully conscious of the consequences of his actions: Before he assassinates king Duncan, he mulls over the act and its consequences in a soliloquy which shows that in addition to weighing the possible practical consequences of his act, he is perfectly aware –in a way an evil man would not be- of the moral values involved. In this vein, he has a clear moral sense which has been shaped in accordance with the expectations of his society at large: His action violates the natural feelings of kindred, hospitality and gratitude. It is his conscience that compels him to verbalize to himself the negative and immoral effects of his acts.

Lady Macbeth, determined to "chastise" (1.5.27) everything in him that prevents him from being evil enough to kill in order to be king, verbally assaults his manhood and courage, accusing him of being a coward:

> Wouldst thou have that
> Which thou esteem'st the ornament of life,

> And live a coward in thine own esteem,
> Letting “I dare not” wait upon “I would,”
> Like the poor cat i' th' adage? (1.7.41-45)

Lady Macbeth accuses him of being a kind of man who can dream of wearing kingly robes only when he is drunk: “Was the hope drunk / Wherein you dress’d yourself? / Hath it slept since?” (1.7.35-36). Though he is a man who wants to attain what he “esteem’st the ornament of life”, he is no better than “the poor cat i' th' adage” (1.7.45), who wants a fish, but does not want to get its feet wet. He wants the crown, but as Maurice Charney points out, “In Sartre’s terms, he wants to have ‘clean hands’” (1993, p. 277).

What seems to impede Macbeth, rather than cowardice or lack of manhood, which are the arguments Lady Macbeth uses to talk him into carrying out their plan, is his disabling conscience. Or rather, it is (to borrow from Hamlet) his conscience that makes him a ‘coward’. It paralyses him and keeps him from filling the gap between desire and action that is necessary to attain that desire. Provided that he lets the voice of his conscience win him over, he would be -in Lady Macbeth’s words- letting “I dare not” wait upon “I would” (1.7.44). Macbeth’s conscience is presented as deeply problematic: It is an impediment rather than a spur to action since the plan he is to carry out requires him to engage in a violent act which troubles him with an uncomfortable awareness that he will be acting against the voice of his conscience. To Macbeth, following the path of desire and ambition –the very traits which Lady Macbeth equates with courage and manhood- means that he will be discarding what makes him not only a moral person but a human being since ‘to be daring’ is to excel in manliness, yet ‘daring too much’ may carry one outside the limits proper to human –or humane- activity: “I dare do all that may become a man; / Who dares do more is none” (1.7.51-52). Unlike Lady Macbeth who cunningly chooses to ignore the

question of ‘humanity’, Macbeth points to the immorality of the act. Yet, Lady Macbeth wins him over by taking the literal definition of ‘man’ and aligning masculinity with daring violence. He would be more of a man for going ahead with the murder:

> What beast was’t, then,
> That made you durst do it, then you were a man;
> And to be more than what you were, you would
> Be so much more the man. (1.7.54-57)

Lady Macbeth’s speech, full of violent imagery and impassioned urgency, brings Macbeth round to their plan to murder the king – a bloody action which, considering the set of ethical values embraced by both Macbeth and society at large, is deemed as yielding to intemperate desire.

Before he gives in to his desire to be king, Macbeth is perfectly conscious of the destructiveness of inordinate passion. His treachery and usurpation of the throne, for which he has no motivation other than “vaulting ambition” (1.7.27), and his later murders to maintain his power make him a man and a king who fails to embody moral and ethical ideals that apply in the personal and public spheres for the individual and for the common good.

Macbeth, both from his own and his public’s perspective, is a gross violator of the moral paradigms current in the west since the classical era. He is regarded as the embodiment of the perversion of ‘virtue’, a significant social ideal that figured prominently in English Renaissance literature and culture and formed the center of Renaissance discourse on ethical behavior. In early modern culture, virtue was understood to be an outcome of self-government and rational disciplining of inordinate passions, grounded on ancient ethical thought. Macbeth, in betraying his king, Duncan, and turning into a “bloody tyrant”, deliberately discards with the four

classical virtues of fortitude, temperance, righteousness and prudence, which Plato identifies with the classes of the city and faculties of man in Book IV of *Republic.* As the analogy between the faculties of man and social classes puts forth, in order for the individual soul to be virtuous, it should be hierarchal like the classes of a 'just' state. Disruption of the hierarchy that exists between the classes of the state brings about a state where injustice, disharmony and disorder prevail. If the person's soul is to be in harmony with itself, the hierarchy between reason and the appetitive part of the soul –which is the source of our passions and desires –should be maintained, which necessarily results in a moderate and virtuous soul. Provided that the appetites –the source of our impulses- are not kept under control by the dictates of reason, that is, the rational part of the soul, the outcome will be an individual torn between conflicted impulses that give rise to a soul experiencing chaos and disorder. Macbeth, finding it hard to keep his passions in control, feels that the thought of murdering the king causes a turmoil in his "single state of man": "My thought, whose murder yet is but fantastical, / Shakes so my single state of man that function / Is smother'd in surmise" (1.3.152-154).

The Ancient Greek and Stoic view of controlling the unruly passions through the dominance of reason passed on to the Renaissance via the writings of Cicero and Seneca (Langis, 2011, p. 2). The moral philosopher Thomas Wright, in his treatise *Passions of the Minde in Generall* published in 1604, two years before *Macbeth* was written, shows how to moderate 'inordinate passions' by using a largely Aristotelian framework informed by humanist learning. Wright describes the passions as "things ever in use, and seldom without abuse;…daily, yea, and almost hourly felt, no less crafty than dangerous, much talked of , and as yet never well thought" (as cited in Langis, 2011, p. 3). Rather than a rational suppression of the passions – like the

Stoic view of *apatheia* - the early modern understanding of a harmonious soul was based on the notion that reason and passion can be harmonized, resulting in moral action. The early moderns counted on their faith in the human ability to do this. Thomas Wright says that he wrote his treatise, *Passions of the Minde in Generall,* in the hopes that “every man may by this come to a knowledge of himself, which ought to be preferred before all treasures and riches” (as cited in Langis, p. 3).

As Macbeth lets his passion and ambition for power take over his moral sense and becomes more and more corrupted by repeatedly indulging his desire for power, he is inevitably led to make imprudent decisions, which lead to the faulty strategy he pursues in Act 5. Because of the disharmony between his reason and passion, he thinks that he is strong enough to outstay any siege: “Our castle’s strength / Will laugh a siege to scorn: here let them lie, / Till famine and the ague eat them up” (5.5.2-4). As opposed to Macbeth’s valiant fury, Malcolm’s army marches forward with caution, keeping their passions under check: “let our just censures /Attend the true event, and put we on/ Industrious soldiership” (5.4.19-21).

One of the figures standing as an exemplar of prudence in the play is Banquo who approaches the witches’ predictions with caution. Even though Banquo admits that his mind has also been preoccupied with their prophecies, “cursed thoughts” (2.1.10) take control of his mind only in his dreams or in “repose”(2.1.11), that is, when he is off guard. Macbeth describes him as a man who has “royalty of nature” (3.1.54) and “dauntless temper of mind” (3.1.57) as opposed to a man who seems to be likely to give in to intemperate desire.

Macbeth and Lady Macbeth are not the only characters that seem to articulate their passions with ‘intemperate speeches’: Macduff utters words of passion as well. Yet, their words of passion are the result of a highly different moral stance. Fooled

by Malcolm’s act, he is convinced that Malcolm is not fit to govern Scotland –or he is not even “fit to live” (4.3.121). Macduff expresses his agony in a torrent of patriotic passion:

> O nation miserable,
> With an untitled tyrant bloody-sceptered,
> When shalt thou see thy wholesome days again,
> Since that the truest issue of thy throne
> By his own interdiction stands accursed,
> And does blaspheme his breed
>
> …
> Fare thee well!
> These evils thou repeat’st upon thyself
> Have banished me from Scotland.—O my breast,
> Thy hope ends here! (4.3.121-132)

Macduff’s ‘intemperate speech’ assures Malcolm – who has been testing him - of his loyalty. Macduff proves to be a man of “noble passion” and a “child of integrity”: He is not a man who, torn between conflicting desires, would bring about chaos and disorder in the country. While Macbeth’s ‘passion’ is the source of evil and wickedness, Macduff’s is the source of goodness, integrity, loyalty and honor since he manages to employ his ‘passion’, that is, his emotive intensity, to ennoble and elevate himself. Thus, Malcolm says:

> Macduff, this noble passion,
> Child of integrity, hath from my soul
> Wiped the black scruples, reconciled my thoughts
> To thy good truth and honor. (4.3.133-136)

The way in which the concepts of virtue and morality are articulated in the play is imbued with non-denominational religious language. Towards the end of his rule, Macbeth’s name has become synonymous with that of the devil. As Macduff says, even in hell there cannot be a more wicked devil. Discussing with Malcolm the ever increasing tyranny and cruelty of Macbeth, Macduff claims: “Not in the legions/ Of

horrid hell can come a devil more damned / In evils to top Macbeth" (4.3.55-57). Macbeth was once thought to be an honest and trustworthy man who bravely served his country and king. Therefore, his treachery and tyranny destroy people's capacity for trust since they cannot rely on 'outward goodness' that does not necessarily mirror the inner goodness of men. It is one of the ironies of the play that Macbeth is outraged by the witches' equivocal predictions, "And be these juggling fiends no more believed / That palter with us in a double sense" (5.8.23-24), although he himself actually plays the part of a great equivocator by destroying the visible distinction between 'virtue' and 'vice'. His countrymen used to believe that he was a virtuous man worthy of honor until he proved otherwise, thus leading everybody to question each other's moral stance. Malcolm suspects that Macduff is Macbeth's agent sent to lure him to his destruction in Scotland. Malcolm describes Macbeth as an "angry god" who is to be appeased with sacrifice and as a tyrant who is so cruel that as soon as one mentions his name, that person's tongue gets scorched with blisters:

> This tyrant, whose sole name blisters our tongues,
> Was once thought honest: you have loved him well.
> He hath not touch'd you yet. I am young, but something
> You may deserve of him through me, and wisdom
> To offer up a weak poor innocent lamb
> T' appease an angry god. (4.3.14-20)

Ironically, Malcolm himself plays the part of an equivocator to protect himself from Macbeth's tricks and lures. Therefore, Malcolm devises a test of Macduff's integrity by 'deceiving' him and making him believe that he clearly lacks every one of the virtues and graces required of a good king. While listing Macbeth's vices as violence, lechery, greed - "smacking of very sin that has a name" (4.3.72) – Malcolm says that he himself is full of even more "confineless harms" (4.3.66), and that his

“evil passions”, “ill-composed affection” and “stanchless avarice” would inflict damage on all his countrymen. He gives a catalogue of “the king-becoming graces” such as “justice, verity, temp’rance, stableness, bounty, mercy, lowliness, devotion, patience, courage, fortitude”, which, not only he himself, but by extension, Macbeth also lacks. Malcolm’s account provides us with a juxtaposition of the ills of a state which is ruled by an evil tyrant and versus a fortunate country ruled by a true king. The vices of a tyrant like Macbeth are like a contagious disease that bears sway over the whole land which “weeps, bleeds, and each new day a gash / Is added to her wounds” (4.3.50-51). Malcolm and Macduff’s words define Macbeth as a man who is the epitome of vice, the effects of whose misrule haunt the whole country.

Exploring Macbeth’s moral sense and his conscience – which appears to be in line with the concept of conscience put forth by classical thinkers and adopted by the Renaissance- entails us to dwell upon his imagination which shows to him the immorality of his actions.

Macbeth’s own perception of himself and his actions do not seem to be different from that of the people around him after Act 2. Macbeth, thanks to what Harold Bloom calls his “proleptic imagination”, is able to anticipate the outcome of his deeds before he performs them. His imagination, being the genesis of his agency, is almost a kind of secular substitute for sacred or divine agency. Displacing divine agency and inspiration which was assumed to be the source from which everything derives, Macbeth’s imagination has the power of anticipating and portraying the results of events in the most vivid manner possible. Macbeth goes in tandem with his imagination towards his deeds although his “horrible imaginings” at first seem to deter him from the course of action he is about to pursue. Macbeth’s power of fancy correlates to what the Renaissance audience might have thought of as the faculty of

imagination: A power of fantasy that is terrifying. In the Renaissance sense of imagination, Macbeth is the emblem of that faculty which is "an equivocal matter for Shakespeare and his era, where it meant both poetic furor, as a kind of substitute for divine inspiration, and a gap torn in reality, almost a punishment for the displacement of the sacred into secular" (Bloom, 1999, p. 512-513). As Bloom says, reading *Macbeth*, we journey inward into Macbeth's "heart of darkness" (p. 518). As we do so, we are to witness how 'darkness' and night – which are, in addition to clothing and disguise, the main motifs in the play –are employed as instruments to cover up the protagonist's inner darkness.

Macbeth's power of fancy that is willing to yield to hallucination has a paradoxical function: By self-objectification, it seems to display in advance the results and effects of his actions as they will be reflected in the microcosm after they are performed. His imagination also brings forth an apocalyptic and nightmarish macrocosm. Macbeth is deeply aware of his criminality and his imagination portrays a world in which he is to be judged from an ethical perspective as a man who violates nature with a most 'unnatural' murder – it is almost as if the cosmos already judges him, producing a sense of self-loathing as he is about to perform his first murder.

Macbeth's imagination, an extension of the dark recesses of his mind, is host to the genesis of his actions, literally leading the way to the chamber in which Duncan sleeps. Macbeth rightly says that it is the "bloody business" he is about to perform that causes this "false creation" on which suddenly blood appears. The dagger, a proleptic image created by his mind, 'walks' ahead of Macbeth to the chamber:

> A dagger of the mind, a false creation,
> Proceeding from the heat-oppressèd brain?

> I see thee yet, in form as palpable
> As this which now I draw.
> Thou marshall'st me the way that I was going,
> And such an instrument I was to use.
> Mine eyes are made the fools o' th' other senses,
> Or else worth all the rest. I see thee still,
> And on thy blade and dudgeon gouts of blood,
> Which was not so before. There's no such thing.
> It is the bloody business which informs
> Thus to mine eyes. (2.1.50-61)

Macbeth willfully deceives himself by embracing a dark and gloomy view of the world and a distorted view of reality that will coalesce into his first act of violence. On the eve of the murder, Macbeth presents us with a dark image, an inverted version of the world that corresponds to the 'unnatural deed' he is about to perform:

> Now o'er the one half-world
> Nature seems dead, and wicked dreams abuse
> The *curtained* sleep. Witchcraft celebrates
> Pale Hecate's offerings, and withered murder,
> Alarumed by his sentinel, the wolf,
> Whose howl's his watch, thus with his stealthy pace,
> With Tarquin's ravishing strides, towards his design
> Moves like a ghost. (2.1.61-69 emphasis added)

An imagined world of 'darkness' prowled by wolves and withered murder provide a scene in which Duncan's death is a foregone conclusion. With the mention of Tarquin, the murder becomes a metaphorical rape of the realm.

The way in which Macbeth employs his imagination as a precursor to his actions strikes the eye as being considerably different from the imaginative power Hamlet possesses. In his essay "Macbeth: *Counter*-Hamlet", Calderwood (2010) examines *Macbeth* in light of concepts like time, action and mediation, and notes that Macbeth is like the photographic negative—not merely different but the total inverse –of Hamlet. One of the most striking differences between the two protagonists is the role their imagination plays in the radical actions they plan to take:

> For Hamlet imagination is an impediment to action, even at times an end in itself, whereas for Macbeth it is the genesis and agency of action. Duncan's

> murder takes place in the mind before it occurs in the castle, and the route from the subjunctive "If it were done" to the indicative "I go, and it is done" is paved by murderous fancies […] Actually Macbeth's imagination is something of a paradox, since it is both a get-between and a go-between for action. As a get-between it occupies the space between the desire to act and the act itself, and hence can even deter action, as in the Hamlet-like "If it were done" soliloquy… Macbeth is momentarily deterred from acting by considerations of justice, duty, and emotion, all arguing that he should get between Duncan and his murderer, "not bear the knife [himself]." On the other hand, as a go-between Macbeth's imagination envisages and conduces to action, most obviously in the "Is this a dagger that I see" soliloquy. (p. 10)

While Hamlet uses his imagination, language and 'staging' as instruments to widen the interim between the ghost's demand for revenge and his own action, Macbeth uses them to erase the gap between the witches' prophecy and the action; he is anxious to pass from illusion to reality. In order for him to get to the 'real' murder, perhaps he needs the illusion of a dagger. Macbeth is anxious to pass from the verbal stage to the action: "Words to the heat of deeds too cold breath gives" (2.1.74). Therefore, as his murderous career advances, his imagination becomes less and less of a get-between.

While Hamlet becomes more and more preoccupied with his power of fancy and language, that is, verbalization and staging as a means to delay action, the way in which Macbeth employs his imagination, language and 'staging' strikes us as being closely related to his acute awareness that his 'guilt' and 'shame-consciousness' will be visible in the public sphere. In other words, whenever we see Macbeth using his "get-between imagination", we realize that he is gripped with a sense that his 'unnatural' actions will be judged by both the imagined watcher and the public eye and that his crime and sense of guilt will be exposed. On the other hand, whenever he employs his "go-between imagination", we see Macbeth trying to alienate himself from his deeds: Since he is aware that his guilt will be a visible emblem of his crime,

he tries to render his conscience and shame-consciousness invisible both to the world and to himself. Therefore, before turning into a mechanical murderer, Macbeth engages in a curious kind of hypocrisy: Not only does he try to project the 'image' of a 'virtuous' man to the outside world, but vainly tries to preserve that 'image' in his own eyes by means of self-deception.

Macbeth, while 'imagining' the aftermath of the murder, has a scene which stands as one of the most apt examples of his 'get-between' imagination: He seems to be deterred from committing the murder since he imagines his deed will be "judged" by the scrutinizing gaze of the cosmos. By engaging in his self-objectifying imagination, Macbeth thinks that the whole cosmos will be 'sharing the knowledge of his deed' since "pity", personified as "a naked newborn babe" in all its innocence –vulnerable but immensely strong –will expose his deed that cannot possibly be 'covered up' or kept 'hidden' from people's eyes:

> After his death, Duncan's virtues
> Will plead like angels, trumpet-tongued, against
> The deep damnation of his taking-off;
> And pity, like a naked newborn babe,
> Striding the blast, or heaven's cherubin horsed
> Upon the sightless couriers of the air,
> Shall blow the horrid deed in every eye,
> That tears shall drown the wind. (1.7.18-25)

Macbeth's soliloquy is imbued with both subtly Christian –angels, trumpets, damnation, heaven's cherubim and a new born babe reminiscent of Christ- and also with judiciary language, which provides us with an imagery that has been recurrently used to delineate the experience of 'conscience' since Cicero: Duncan's virtues, just as they did during his lifetime, will display themselves majestically. More importantly, bearing witness to "the horrid deed", his "trumpet-tongued" virtues will loudly "plead against" Macbeth. Thus, his virtues will play the part of an 'accuser'.

Revealing Macbeth's guilt, the whole cosmos will play the part of a prosecutor and a judge, finally pronouncing him guilty.

Indeed, king Duncan's murder is revealed 'loudly'. Lady Macbeth associates the manner in which the crime is revealed with the noise of "a hideous trumpet" which "calls to parley/ The sleepers of the house" (2.3.94-95). Macduff returns from king Duncan's chamber to announce his murder and urges the sleepers to bear witness to the event by drawing an analogy between the exposure of the hideous crime and the coming of the last judgment:

> Awake, awake!
> Ring the alarum bell. –Murder and treason!
> Banquo, Donalbain, Malcolm, awake!
> Shake off this downy sleep, death's counterfeit,
> And look on death itself. Up, up, and see
> The Great doom's image. Malcolm, Banquo,
> As from your graves rise up and walk like sprites
> To the countenance of this hour. – Ring the bell. (2.3.85-92)

Macduff, by using apocalyptic language, urges the sleepers to awake and bear witness to "the Great Doom's image". Just as such murder brings about an apocalyptic atmosphere, the revelation of the crime is in keeping with the original meaning of the word "apocalypse", which means to reveal something hidden. Macbeth has performed a deed of apocalyptic consequence and it will not remain hidden since everybody will 'share the knowledge' of his wrongdoing by rising from their metaphorical "graves" and walking "like sprites to the countenance of this hour". Macduff is trying to awake a guilty conscience which will inevitably stand 'naked' as if it is the Last Judgment.

Nevertheless, what Macbeth is more concerned with is the judgment that he will face on this earth. To him, the apocalypse, the revelation of his guilt, that is, his shame-consciousness, is not 'hereafter'. Rather, it is here, "upon this bank and shoal

of time". He is aware that if only "this blow", the murder of Duncan, "might be the be-all and the end-all here", if only the moral consequences of his deed did not face him in this world, he would "jump the life to come". Then, the murder of Duncan would be the end of his action. However, Macbeth imagines the repercussions of the murder, which will be more dire *here*, that is, right in this world, than they would be in "the life to come":

> If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well
> It were done quickly. If the assassination
> Could trammel up the consequence, and catch
> With his surcease success; that but this blow
> Might be the be-all and the end-all *here*,
> But *here*, upon this bank and shoal of time,
> We'd jump the life to come. But in these cases
> *We still have judgment here* [.]   (1.7.1-8 emphasis added)

Macbeth claims to see no problem in the means that he will be employing to achieve this end; however, the moral consequences of the act of murder, in Thomas Elyot's words, will be "openly published" for everybody to see. It is not divine retribution that makes Macbeth waver. After all, he would be willing to risk damnation in the next world. His problem is that the moral repercussions of such a murder will manifest themselves in the form of retribution 'here and now'.

The principle of earthly retribution was one of the master-themes in *The Mirror for Magistrates,* the most significant exemplar of a long and vital tradition of historical non-dramatic poetry in the Elizabethan age. *The Mirror for Magistrates*, begun by William Baldwin as a continuation of John Lydgate's *Fall of Princes*, was first printed in 1559 (Ribner, 2005, p. 4). As Ribner suggests, it was a work which gave to many Elizabethans their first acquaintance with history, and which, naturally, was an important shaping force upon the history play. Moreover, the very word 'mirror' tells us that William Baldwin, in line with the typical attitudes of a

Renaissance historian, meant his stories of unfortunate kings and statesmen to serve as lessons to the present, to teach those in power to avoid the tragic errors of the past (Ribner, p. 99). These exemplary stories, in the form of imaginary monologues by the ghosts of certain eminent British statesmen who came to unfortunate ends, were meant to educate the prince and teach him to shun vice. Macbeth, in referring to "these cases" – perhaps those recorded in the *Mirror*- is very much aware that he not only fails to 'imitate' and internalize the ideal figure put forth by the teachings of historical precedent – which classical authors deem a necessity for a clear conscience- but he also fails to project that 'image'.

In an attempt to evade "judgment here", Macbeth tries to hide his deeds so that his 'conscience' and his shame-consciousness will not be revealed: Neither his own eye nor an external eye should share the knowledge of his crime. Just as he cannot afford to lose "golden opinions" he "bought" from all sorts of people, "which would be *worn* now in their newest gloss" (1.7.35-37 emphasis added), his sense of guilt should be kept under a cloak: Signs of virtue, just like "golden opinions worn in their newest gloss", can be seen by other people inasmuch as they are encouraged to be majestically exhibited –though in Macbeth's case they serve to cloak the ugly truth underneath. Therefore, he needs to protect his 'seeming' decency by engaging in hypocrisy. In response to Banquo, who is uneasy due to the witches' prophesies, Macbeth pretends to forget about them. He explains his absent-mindedness by offering an excuse: "My dull brain was wrought / With things forgotten" (1.3.166-167), whereas in fact he is caught up in the future offered by the witches' words.

One of the most striking examples of Macbeth's hypocrisy takes place right after the revelation of the murder: Macbeth attributes his reason for killing the

grooms to a ‘passionate outburst’ that stems from the unrelenting loyalty he feels towards his king:

> Who can be wise, amazed, temp'rate, and furious,
> Loyal and neutral, in a moment? No man.
> Th' expedition of my violent love
> Outrun the pauser, reason. Here lay Duncan,
> His silver skin laced with his golden blood,
> And his gashed stabs looked like a breach in nature
> For ruin’s wasteful entrance; there, the murderers,
> Steeped in the colors of their trade, their daggers
> Unmannerly breeched with gore. Who could refrain,
> That had a heart to love, and in that heart
> Courage to make ’s love known? (2.3.127-137)

Yet his hypocrisy does not seem to serve its purpose. From the very outset, Malcolm and Donalbain understand that they are unsafe in present company. As Donalbain says: “Where we are, / There’s dagger in men’s smiles” (2.3.165).

The only person with whom Macbeth shares the knowledge of his first crime is Lady Macbeth. Is it because having an accomplice will reduce his sense of guilt and shame, which can be considered an example of diffusion of responsibility? Provided that he is not alone in his crime, he will not be the only one who will bear all the guilt and suffer all the pangs of conscience. In addition, if the plan should end in failure, such failure will not be Macbeth’s only. The role Macbeth will be playing in the acting out of the murder is explicitly assigned. Lady Macbeth will provide the plot, whereas Macbeth will be the one who will be the one who executes the plan. In the end, Lady Macbeth has to consummate the action by taking the daggers back to the chamber and “gilding” the faces of the grooms with Duncan’s blood since Macbeth ‘seems’ to be too horrified to carry this final part of the project through. He is too afraid to think what he has done and he cannot go back to the chamber; he cannot even lay eyes on what his ‘hands’ have done: “Look on ’t again I dare not.” (2.2) He frantically talks about the ‘voices’ he has heard in the chamber:

> Methought I heard a voice cry, “Sleep no more!
> Macbeth does murder sleep”—the innocent sleep,
> Sleep that knits up the raveled sleave of care,
> The death of each day’s life, sore labor’s bath,
> Balm of hurt minds, great nature’s second course,
> Chief nourisher in life’s feast.
> …
> Still it cried, “Sleep no more!” to all the house.
> “Glamis hath murdered sleep, and therefore Cawdor
> Shall sleep no more. Macbeth shall sleep no more. (2.2.47-57)

As the classical writers put forth, Macbeth here displays ‘the visible traits of conscience’. Relying on ‘words’ has been –and will be- a strategy to hide his actions from his own self. Nevertheless, right after the murder, he finds that ‘words’ he made use of to delineate a world where night prevails unveil his deed. Perhaps it is the voice of his conscience that is heard at this moment of moral hysteria: Macbeth has tried to stifle the voice of his conscience by embracing a dark and gloomy view of the world so that neither the world nor himself would be privy to this atrocious murder. Yet, his conscience has witnessed the deed. By murdering Duncan, he has destroyed natural human relationships. He has also murdered “the innocent sleep” which, like the innocent “naked new born baby” that is vulnerable but immensely strong, is “chief nourisher in life’s feast”. “Macbeth shall sleep no more” and Lady Macbeth, who ironically blames Macbeth for being “infirm of purpose” for the words he utters, will not be able to sleep either.

Just as the displaying of virtues accounts for a ‘virtuous’ man, exposure of guilt and shame is evidence of ‘wickedness’. It is one of the greatest ironies of the play that Lady Macbeth thinks that as long as no one bears witness to an outward evidence of their crime, they will be clear of any accusations. Provided that the blood, which serves as the ‘witness’ to their guilt, is removed from their hands, they will not be responsible for the crime:

Go get some water
And wash this filthy witness from your hand--
…
Give me the daggers. The sleeping and the dead
Are but as pictures. 'Tis the eye of childhood
That fears a painted devil. If he do bleed,
I'll gild the faces of the grooms withal
For it must seem their guilt. (2.2.60-73)

In contrast to his wife's practical words, Macbeth imagines that his hands have started plucking at his own eyes, so that they should not witness his shame:

What hands are here! Ha, they pluck out mine eyes.
Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood
Clean from my hand? No, this my hand will rather
The multitudinous seas incarnadine,
Making the green one read. (2.2.77-81)

Though Lady Macbeth is confident in that they will be clear of guilt and culpability by washing the "filthy witness" from their hands, later gone mad and guilt ridden, she will try to wash the metaphorical blood from her hands in Act 5 –one of the great ironies of the play. Her conscience, just like the return of the suppressed that manifests itself through metaphors, disturbs her mental balance.

'Shame' is felt not only because one has fallen short of the ethical ideals upheld by one's community, but also for falling short of one's own ideal self-image formed in accordance with the values and expectations of that community. Therefore, in order to escape self-shame, Macbeth tries to detach himself from his crime, talking about it in abstract terms. It is as if his hands move to kill Duncan without his knowledge. He imagines himself moving like a ghost towards his design. Macbeth's "go-between" imagination is marked by the images of 'disguise' and 'covering'. He thinks it is best for him to perform his evil deed when the gaze of the

cosmos is curtained by sleep so that it will not witness his shame and share the knowledge of his crime.

Equivocation, speaking in double-terms (like the witches' famous "fair is foul, foul is fair") is another means Macbeth makes use of to escape culpability in his own mind. If only he could, he would make his eye "wink at his hand". Relying on the power of words, he equivocates with himself to suppress his conscience. What he asks for is impossible: He wants to be successful; he wants to see the result of the murder, yet he does not want to set eyes on his act. Then he could shut the self-objectified critical gaze witnessing the action of the 'hand' which makes him a 'contemptible' man who is not anywhere near the ideal figure his eyes would like to perceive: His crime is not something he wants to share with his better self:

> 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. (1.4.57-60)

In stark contrast to Duncan's words "signs of nobleness, like stars, shall shine / On all deservers" (1.4.47-48), Macbeth wants the stars to "hide their fires" since what they illuminate will not be "signs of nobleness", but the shame that stems from having "black and deep desires" and execution of the murder inspired by them.

Like her husband, Lady Macbeth also shuns disclosure. While invoking evil spirits and commanding them to "stop up the access and passage to remorse" (1.5.51), Lady Macbeth employs the imagery of "thick night" and "blanket of the dark" so that neither she nor heaven peeping through "the blanket of the dark" will share the knowledge of her guilt:

> Come, thick night,
> And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell,

> That my keen knife see not the wound it makes,
> Nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark
> To cry "Hold, hold!" (1.5.47-61)

So too Macbeth, walking towards his crime scene, asks the ground beneath his feet not to hear his steps and echo them, breaking the ghastly silence of the moment:

> Thou sure and firm-set earth,
> Hear not my steps, which way they walk, for fear
> Thy very stones prate of my whereabout,
> And take the present horror from the time,
> Which now suits with it. (2.1.44-74)

Though Macbeth bids the stones not to "prate his whereabouts", he will later admit that

> Stones have been known to move, and trees to speak
> Augures, and understood relations, have
> By magot-pies, and choughs, and rooks, brought forth
> The secret'st man of blood. (3.4.152-155)

Macbeth's hopes that his crimes will not be discovered have already been replaced by his keen awareness that shameful exposure and the earthly judgment are imminent. Metaphorically, the stones that cover the bodies of the dead will move and bring about the discovery of the bodies, which will inevitably lead to the discovery of their murderer.

The very strategy –in his own words, "bloody instructions" – Macbeth pursues returns to plague its own author. The following lines uttered by Macbeth make a modern reader recall the Derridean figure of the *pharmakon:*

.

> But in these cases
> We still have judgment here, that we but teach
> Bloody instructions, which, being taught return
> To plague th' inventor. This even-handed justice
> Commends th' ingredience of our poisoned chalice
> To our own lips. (1.7.7-12)

Tracing the multiple meanings assigned to the pharmakon in Plato's dialogues – especially in *Phaedrus*— Derrida notes a dichotomy:

> This pharmakon, this 'medicine', this philter which acts as both remedy and poison, already introduces itself into the body of discourse with all its ambivalence. This charm, this spellbinding virtue, this power of fascination can be –alternately and simultaneously- beneficent or maleficent. (2004, p. 429)

Accordingly, a leitmotif of poison and remedy keeps recurring throughout the play: In response to Lady Macbeth's remark "Things without all remedy / Should be without regard. What's done is done" (3.2. 13-14), Macbeth says: "We have scorched the snake, not killed it. She'll close and be herself whilst our poor malice / Remains in danger of her former tooth" (3.2. 15-18).

Macbeth stubbornly tries to avoid confronting his shame. He 'imagines' Banquo's ghost shaking its "gory locks" in 'full view of the public,' as if looking at him accusingly with its penetrating gaze. Macbeth vainly tells himself that the spectre does not look *into* him since it has no "speculation in those eyes":

> Avaunt! and quit my sight! let the earth hide thee!
> Thy bones are marrowless, thy blood is cold;
> Thou hast no speculation in those eyes
> Which thou dost glare with! (3.4.113-116)

However, even though Macbeth tries to find comfort in thinking that the ghost has no "speculation" in its eyes, he still cannot be secure. Those eyes are no comfort to him since the blankness of their gaze serves as a *speculum* (Latin for mirror), reflecting and exposing a 'truthful' image of himself and the guilt he has been trying to conceal from the world and himself.

One of the main differences between Hamlet's and Macbeth's use of their imaginative powers, verbalization and 'staging' can be seen most clearly at this

point. Hamlet claims that his imagination and words will be able to detect shame and fear of exposure in King Claudius and his mother Gertrude, whereas the way in which Macbeth uses them lays bare his fear of detection. Hamlet states that when the players stage *The Murder of Gonzago*, he will determine whether Claudius is guilty of King Hamlet's death. Although by this point in the play, he is already convinced of Claudius' guilt, he says: "For murder, though it have no tongue will speak / With most miraculous organ" (2.2. 622-23). Hamlet, believing in the classical idea about theater being a kind of "mirror" uses the play as a *speculum* (mirror) that will reflect and *reveal* King Claudius's guilt:

> […]the purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first and now, was and is, to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature, to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of time his form and pressure. (Shakespeare, 1948, 3.2. 21-23)

When, upon seeing the player king murdered in his garden by his nephew, Claudius stops the play and rushes out, Hamlet, observing Claudius' reaction to the play, becomes exuberant that the ghost's words have been proven true and Claudius' guilt has been exposed.

Macbeth, on the other hand, – before turning into a mechanical killer - uses his imagination and his words to project the 'image' of a virtuous man both to himself and to the outside world. He plays the part of a hypocrite in order to evade the penetrating gaze of the public. Not only does he try to evade experiencing his conscience as something open to public inspection and in full view of everyone, but vainly tries to hide his shame from himself by 'self-equivocation'.

CHAPTER 3

MACBETH: A POLITICAL SCHEMER

> Thou wouldst be great,
> Art not without ambition, but without
> The illness should attend it. What thou wouldst highly,
> That wouldst thou holily; wouldst not play false
> And yet wouldst wrongly win.
>
> Lady Macbeth (1.5.18-24)

Characters like Shakespeare's Edmund, Richard III and Iago are perhaps more readily identifiable to the reader as infamous Machiavellian characters than Macbeth is: They are skillful manipulators who are adept in political maneuvering in their pursuit of power, exploiting every other character, adapting to every situation – no matter how unexpected a situation is – and turning everything to their own advantage. In keeping with Machiavellian codes, they are the embodiment of *metis* – cunning, acuteness of understanding and 'wisdom'.

In Ancient Greece *metis* stood for a type of intelligence and of thought that is useful in formulating strategy when faced with disconcerting complexity and intricacy that prevented one from an exact calculation and decision. As opposed to the Ancient Greek understanding of it as complementary to, or even equal to virtue, for a political schemer 'cunning intelligence' and precipitous action are part and parcel of political expediency and stand solely for virtuosity rather than virtue: Moral virtue does not necessarily accompany virtuosity since most of the time it proves to be useless and unserviceable in practical operations for which political virtuosity is needed. On the contrary, one might - or even should - resort to ruthlessness, "illness", and play "false" if one is really ambitious to win. Thus, Lady Macbeth is mindful of the necessity of concealing one's true motives and feigning good

intentions so as to gain an end so much so that we cannot help but think that Lady Macbeth must have read Machiavelli's *The Prince* and anticipated Hobbes. The soliloquy she delivers upon reading her husband's letter expresses Lady Macbeth's awareness that Macbeth lacks this 'cunning intelligence'.

Her speech provides us with an insight into Macbeth's way of thinking. She knows her husband better than anyone; she knows his strengths and weaknesses and most importantly, she sees the kind of image Macbeth has of himself in his own mind. No doubt he wants to be king; he is not "without ambition", yet he lacks the 'right' kind of ambition – it is without the "illness" necessary to acquire the "greatness" that is promised to him. Even from his letter to his wife whom he addresses as "my dearest partner of greatness", one can tell Macbeth rejoices at the prospect of being king, but he does not give the impression of a man who has the determination to go all the way to attain this end and to use the needed means at hand. Even though he expresses a remarkable enthusiasm to deliver the news to his wife, "This I have thought good to deliver thee, my dearest partner of greatness, that thou might'st not lose the dues of rejoicing by being ignorant of what greatness is promised thee" (1.5.10-13), both Lady Macbeth and he know that Macbeth, not being equipped with the necessary characteristics for practical politics, would not show the same enthusiasm to take this matter further.

Before exploring the extent to which Macbeth lives up to Machiavelli's or Hobbes's paradigms for practical politics, it might be helpful to elucidate the reasons why Macbeth is at best a would-be Machiavellian or Hobbesian figure. In stark contrast to characters like Richard III, Macbeth does not derive pleasure from his deeds; he 'appears' to be in immense pain for choosing evil. The way in which Macbeth, being one of the most intensely subjective characters ever created by

Shakespeare, chooses to express his horror before committing his first crime and the remorse he feels for the deed he performs, leads many critics to read *Macbeth* within a strict moral framework rather than a political or at least a politico-moral one. Moreover, considering the fact that *Macbeth* ends with the protagonist's "cursed head" (5.8.66), brandished triumphantly by Macduff, which is often interpreted as the destruction of evil and restoration of order, the play is often regarded an illustration of the downsides of "overweening ambition", both for the individual himself and the community the individual belongs to: Samuel Johnson wrote that in Macbeth "the danger of ambition is well described" (as cited in Bradley, 1905, p. 106). A.C. Bradley, a famous early twentieth century scholar, described Macbeth as "exceedingly ambitious" (1905, p. 106). Similarly, Hardin Craig says that Macbeth "sacrifices everything to *wicked* ambition" (1948, p. 1045). In addition to the reading of *Macbeth* as the story of "moral corruption", numerous critics have engaged in the age old question of fate and free will, which is, needless to say, closely related to the points taken up in other readings that focus on Macbeth's inordinate ambition which means the transgression of moral codes.

Since *Macbeth* is based on the events in the life of a quasi-historical figure, it is often considered to be a history play. However, Shakespeare generally played fast and loose with his sources, which allowed the plays to be read as powerful tragedies. Significantly, while basing *Macbeth* on details in Holinshed's account *Chronicles of England, Scotland, Ireland*, Shakespeare omits those details pertaining to Duncan as an ineffective and weak ruler:

> The beginning of Duncans reigne was verie quiet and peaceable, without anie notable trouble; but after it was perceiued how negligent he was in punishing offendors, manie misruled person tooke occasion thereof to trouble the peace and quiet state of the commonwealth, by seditious commotions which first had their beginnings in this wise. (1808, p. 265)

In Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, on the other hand, we are not presented with an account of a threat to the commonwealth which might be brought about by Duncan's gentle nature. While in Shakespeare's interpretation Duncan stands as a wise and elderly exemplar who is revered and loved by his people, in Holinshed's chronicles Duncan is a "feeble ruler" and "Macbeth, having dispatched him, goes on to reign brilliantly for ten years" (Greenblatt, 2008, p. 2569). According to Susan Snyder, who reads *Macbeth* by focusing on the frequently explored theme of moral transgression, Shakespeare's omission of these details helps create "a stark black-white moral opposition" (1992, p. 201). As Snyder further claims, the fact that Shakespeare decided to make Macbeth act alone against Duncan - whereas in Holinshed's account Macbeth is joined in regicide by Banquo and other thanes - suggests that Shakespeare's aim was to "focus on private, purely moral issues uncomplicated by the gray shades of political expediency" (p. 202). To suggest that Macbeth's decisive tragic act is downright horrid and unequivocally wrong comes across as quite a fair assumption. However, to claim that the play merely deals with moral issues while excluding the gray shades of political expediency in order to foreground the protagonist's moral failure solely as a spiritual or ethical problem rather than a political one is to underestimate Shakespeare's ability to create infinitely complex characters and plays. Shakespeare's characters are not caricatures. They are more than a mere sum of moral perversions or moral improvements. Nor does their predicament stand for straightforward answers to the questions that stem from the tension between conflicting desires and moral values.

Shakespeare transforms Holinshed's account, only to turn Macbeth into an immensely intricate psyche. The complexity and universality of Shakespeare's characters lie in the fact that Shakespeare makes us internalize the radical anxiety,

ambiguity, fear and outrage the characters experience when they inevitably find themselves at the intersection of political paradigms, moral and cultural obligations, which are precisely the elements that make us human. Harold Bloom in his *Shakespeare: The Invention of Human* says that Shakespeare's final strength is radical internalization and Macbeth "is his most internalized drama, played out in the guilty imagination that we share with Macbeth" (1999, p. 545). Macbeth "represents all our imaginations, including our capacity for anticipating futures we both wish for and fear" (p. 536). Instead of focusing solely on the moral context of the play, Bloom notes that we are lead to internalize Macbeth's sense of "unknown fear":

> Since we are compelled to internalize Macbeth, the unknown fear finally is of ourselves […] The most surprising observation on fear in *Macbeth* was also Wilson Knight's: "Whilst Macbeth lives in conflict with himself there is misery, evil, fear, when, at the end, he and others have openly identified himself with evil, he faces the world fearless: nor does he appear evil any longer." I think I see where Wilson Knight was aiming, but a few revisions are necessary. Macbeth's broad progress is from proleptic horror to a sense of baffled expectations, in which a feeling of having been outraged takes the place of fear. "Evil" we can set aside, it is redundant, rather like calling Hitler or Stalin evil. When Macbeth is betrayed by hallucination and foretelling, he manifests a profound and energetic outrage, like a frantic actor always fated to miss all his cues. The usurper goes on murdering, and achieves no victory over time or the self. (p. 543)

Just as calling Hitler or Stalin "evil" is redundant, to cast Macbeth as a mere transgressor who is the embodiment of evil is also redundant. Macbeth's sense of fear is finally replaced by a sense of immense indignation, which Bloom rightly attributes to Macbeth's realization that he has been deceived by prophecies and hallucination. In addition to being betrayed by the witches and his own mind, the source of Macbeth's fear and subsequent outrage is also his political incapacity to realize the future he wishes for himself and to retain the power he attains. Namely,

Macbeth is outraged because he fails to live up to certain characteristics that are essential to prevail in power politics.

Macbeth might be a great poet in expressing his apathy, despair and nihilism upon receiving the news of his wife's death in Act 5 Scene 5. He might be a great warrior in staging an energetic outrage just before he is killed (5.8.21-25, 32-39). However, he fails to understand that martial power does not necessarily translate into success in the world of power politics. Therefore, his "baffled expectations" also have to do with his failure to recognize the equivocal nature of the world of politics, which always requires maneuvering and manipulation (though, ironically, he himself is a great equivocator). Those are the instruments which a successful warrior, whose greatest merits are generally expected to be loyalty and bravery coupled with physical strength, does not necessarily resort to so as to win on the battlefield. Macbeth fails to realize that he is not a politician, which, after all, might be the reason for his downfall. Therefore, seeing that the world which Macbeth confronts is a political one - a world that is undoubtedly complicated by the gray shades of political expediency - such claims as Snyder's should be taken with a grain of salt since the political and moral worlds of *Macbeth* tend to converge.

It is evident that *Macbeth* is also an openly *political* play. Though the readings which focus on the willing moral corruption of its protagonist cannot be readily disregarded, they inevitably come across as reductionist when they focus solely on the moral implications of the play. Exploring how Macbeth fails to operate in this arena will allow us to view Macbeth's failure as laying bare the equivocal nature of political truths.

To point out the significance of politics and the necessity of taking the proper action not only to flourish but also to survive in such a world, it suffices to look at

the dialogue between Macbeth and king Duncan's sons in Act 2 Scene 3. This dialogue, which takes place right after Duncan's murder is announced, generally tends to be glossed over. However, it lays bare the stark contrast between Macbeth's and Malcolm's reactions to the murder. Thus, it is the most telling example that we can give to draw attention to the difference between their temperaments and their outlook on politics.

> DONALBAIN. What is amiss?
> MACBETH. You are, and do not know't.
> The spring, the head, the fountain of your blood
> Is stopped; the very source of it is stopped.
> MACDUFF. Your royal father's murdered.
> MALCOLM. O, by whom? (2.3.113- 118)

Macbeth, being the great warrior and poet that he is, has just delivered one of the most painstakingly crafted elegies in the play. He proclaims: "Renown and grace is dead. The wine of life is drawn, and the mere lees/ Is left this vault to brag of" (2.3.110-112). Perhaps to deflect suspicion, he duplicates Macduff's lament where he compares the anointed body of the king with God's temple. A murderer has broken into God's temple "and stole thence the life o' th' building" (2.3.78). Likewise, Macbeth compares Duncan's death to the image of wine that is drawn off too soon, thus leaving nothing but the dregs: Eucharistic "wine of life" that stands for the king's blood has been irreversibly wasted. Malcolm and Donalbain, on the other hand, display another kind of outlook: One that is much more useful in the realm they are operating. Having just learned that his father has been murdered - in Macbeth's words, the spring, the fountain, the very source of his blood is stopped - Malcolm reacts with quickness and efficiency rather than delivering a highly embellished lament. He does not need extravagant words to describe how cataclysmic the whole situation is. His father has been murdered; however, rather

than an impassioned speech, “by whom?” is the most significant question for which he needs an answer inasmuch as both he and his brother Donalbain are aware that their fate “hid in an auger hole, may rush and seize” them. And the right time will come to turn their grief into action.

Macbeth, though he is unsuited by experience and temperament to prevail in the political arena he steps into, decides to take an action that he knows is certain to end badly. He sets on a cause that will propel his fall, but he vainly tries to avoid that fall by more and more murders. As opposed to the rightful king Duncan, Macbeth, considering the nature of his initial action, his unrelenting commitment and successive murders to maintain his status as king, strikes us as a Machiavellian overreacher. In this sense, Macbeth is more closely related to the *de facto* tradition in political and ethical terms than the politics of *de jure* hereditary monarchy: Like the horse metaphor he uses, he overreaches to seize power instead of inheriting it, that is, getting it through fair means. Accordingly, to maintain the power for which he has overreached, Macbeth should have reified the principles Machiavelli put forth for a successful rule in his *The Prince.*

Out of the 26 chapters of *The Prince*, many are devoted to war, conquest and establishing ‘colonies’. Viewing Macbeth from the vantage point of Machiavelli’s political teachings, we will be looking at Chapter 1 (How may are the kinds of principalities and in what modes they are acquired), Chapter 2 (Of Hereditary Principles), Chapter 3 (Of Mixed Principles), Chapter 8 (Of Those who have attained principality through Crimes), Chapter 9 (Of the civil Principality), Chapter 15 (Of those things man and especially princes are to be praised or blamed), Chapter 16 (Of Liberality and Parsimony), Chapter 17 (Of cruelty, clemency, and whether it is better to be loved or feared), Chapter 18 (In what mode princes should keep their words),

Chapter 19 (Of avoiding contempt and hatred), Chapter 21 (How to gain reputation), Chapter 25 (Fortuna and how to resist it).

The question of Machiavelli's influence on Shakespeare has been thoroughly debated. As to the obvious question whether we have evidence that Shakespeare read Machiavelli: John Roe, in his *Shakespeare and Machiavelli* (2002), carefully recounts the availability of Machiavelli's writings in the sixteenth century: There were Italian, Latin, and French versions of *The Prince* (1532), but no printed English version. An English translation was not made until 1640. However, there were manuscript translations in circulation (Roe, 2002, p. 17). Though there was no English translation published in Shakespeare's lifetime, Shakespeare may well have had access to other editions. Even if Shakespeare had not read *The Prince*, the name of Machiavelli had become a household term in England for evil and duplicity. Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta*, written in 1589-90, has as its one-man prologue "Machevill" who introduces the play: "Albeit the world think Machevill is dead/ Yet was his soul but flown beyond the Alps" (T*he Jew of Malta* Prologue 1-2). At any rate, when speculating about whether Shakespeare really *read* Machiavelli, we might find it useful to keep in mind Foucault's designation of the 'transdiscursive', by which he refers to Marx and Freud: It is clear that Machiavelli was one of the most prominent and influential figures in the early modern civilization. Therefore, *The Prince*, like Shakespeare's most prestigious sources such as Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Plutarch's *Lives*, can be seen as a powerful work that had influence in the formation of his plays - including *Macbeth* - via "some deep acculturation" (Barkan 64). In line with this notion, Leonard Barkan states in his "What did Shakespeare read?":

> One can hardly imagine, for instance, the erotic ideals of the Sonnets without Plato, or the politics of Milan and Naples in *The Tempest* without

> Machiavelli, or the transports of love, whether straight or parodied, from *Love's Labour's Lost* to *Antony and Cleopatra*, without Petrarch (2003, p. 64).

Providing a thorough Machiavellian reading of *Macbeth* in her essay, Barbara Riebling (1991) notes, "Machiavelli's works shocked sixteenth - century audiences, who were accustomed to seeing Christian and civic virtue as interchangeable; in his version of truth, 'la verità effettuale,' political *virtù* is ineluctably at odds with religion and its rules" (p. 273). Macbeth's 'evil' doings are clearly not in harmony with what medieval and Renaissance citizens had been assured of for centuries: "an essential harmony between religious and political truths" (Riebling, p. 273). Though Shakespeare makes no overt reference to Christianity, Macbeth's polar opposite Duncan stands as an exemplary ruler in that he lives up to the model which Christian humanists like Thomas Elyot and Erasmus valorize by "equating effective rule with upright behavior and advising the prince to be nothing more nor less than a good Christian" (Riebling, p. 273-74). Duncan, who is deemed to have "hath borne his faculties so meek" (1.7.17), substantiates the prevalent medieval assertion that divine justice can be acted out in the political realm through the 'anointed' king who rules in accordance with the rules prescribed by religion. Namely, what the king and his will manifest is God's justice and will on earth, making their rule "legitimate" and unquestionable.

James I, during whose reign *Macbeth* was written and first performed in his court, sees the divine rights of kings as an extension of apostolic succession. In his *The True Law of Free Monarchies* that was first published in 1598, James I writes that kings "sit upon God his throne in the earth and have the count of their administration to give unto him" (1996, p. 54). James I believed that he was God's emissary on earth and his theory of kingship was in line with that of John of

Salisbury, an English clergyman and humanist of the 12th century, who equates resistance to ruling power with resistance to the ordinance of God. Likewise, James I paraphrases a number of sections from Scripture to support his notion of absolutism and the divine nature of monarchy. He uses the language of paternal kinship to explain the relationship of the king to his subjects: “By the law of nature, the king becomes a natural father to all his lieges at his coronation” (p. 57). Hence, the king is bound to care for all his subjects. While he speaks of the father / king’s duties towards his children / subjects, James I regards these duties as binding only the king’s heart and conscience. However, “the other branch of this mutual and reciprock band is the duty and the allegiance that the lieges *owe* to their king (p. 57 emphasis added). Though the bond - reciprock band- that unites the king and his subjects and binds them together is a *mutual* one, it places the subject under a filial debt that is actually more binding. He describes an uprising against the king as “monstrous and unnatural” (p. 74) and compares the relation of the king to his subjects “to a head of a body composed of divers members”. The king, the head of the body prevents “all evil that may come to the body or any part thereof” (p. 29). While Machiavelli would define Shakespeare’s Duncan as the ultimately ineffective ruler and his reign as condemnable misrule, James I would recognize Macbeth’s usurpation as an unwarrantable act of desecration.

Usurpation is regarded as a violation of the law of God. The reason usurpation is regarded as the foundation of corruption, blasphemy and sacrilege can be that it is not only the violation of God’s law, which was considered the very basis of both politics and morality, but the perversion of human nature because the law of God is to be internalized in the hearts or minds of human beings. Thomas Aquinas holds that the individual is naturally inclined to good. So, he sees the political

community as being directed to the common good, thus serving the individual by promoting a life of virtue. Since reason is the sole power that governs the human soul and the single authority of God governs the whole universe, a political community is best governed by the single authority of a wise and just monarch who will rule in accordance with the natural law. As Aquinas explains in his *Summa Thelogica*:

> Natural law is nothing else than the rational creature's participation of the eternal law for among all others, the rational creature is subject to Divine Providence in the most excellent way, in so far as it partakes of a share of providence, by being provident both for itself, and for others. Wherefore, it has a share of the Eternal Reason, whereby it has a natural inclination to its proper act and end (trans. 1981, I-II, 91.2)

Aquinas calls this natural inclination whereby human beings understand the fundamental moral requirements of their nature and the first principles of natural law: *synderisis* (trans. 1981*,* I-II, 90.4 ad 1)*.* A natural knowledge of the natural law is instilled in our minds and its author is no other than God. Therefore, since human beings are guided by *synderesis* by means of which they can derive morals*,* natural law –in other words, eternal law –is the only basis for morality and politics. When announcing the murder of Duncan, Macduff makes use of images of blasphemy and desecration as the eternal law has been drastically violated and the very ground of morality and politics has been shaken. For Macduff, Duncan's murder is an act of religious desecration: "Most sacrilegious Murther hath broke ope / The Lord's anointed Temple, and stole thence / The life o'th'building! (2.3.66-68). In a similar vein, in his attempt to explain why he murdered Duncan's servants – a plan Lady Macbeth eventually devises to cover up their guilt by blaming it on the servants— Macbeth alludes to the severance of the natural bonds inscribed by natural law as bodied forth by Duncan:

> Here lay Duncan,
> His silver skin laced with golden blood,

> and his gashed stabs looked like a breach in nature
> For ruin's wasteful entrance, there the murderers. (2.3.113-116)

Macbeth is a sinner according to traditional orthodox Christianity since he seems to act against the very fundamental law written in the human conscience—*synderesis*: in Aquinas' words, to seek good and avoid evil as a necessary means, not only for union with God but also for social harmony. Therefore, regicide is a crime against nature itself: The sense of outrage and chaos that follows the murder are entirely Shakespeare's invention as opposed to Holinshed's narrative. However, this should not necessarily be taken as an ideological sympathy on Shakespeare's part. There is no overt reference that can lead us to infer that the play ultimately points to the superiority and the benevolence of a king characterized by traditional Christian values. After all, the play begins with a bloody civil war. Violence and blood that will dominate the play are also recurrent motifs in the first and last scenes of the play. The fact that *Macbeth* begins with revolt and bloodshed suggests that Duncan's kingship was susceptible to chaos.

Hence, it should be noted that the sense of chaos and outrage that takes over in the aftermath of regicide does not stand solely for the violation of the traditional Christian model of kingship. *Macbeth*, like Shakespeare's other plays, does not aim to enact God's providential design. As Harold Bloom suggests:

> Despite some desperate allusions by several of the characters *Macbeth* allows no relevance to Christian revelation. Macbeth is the deceitful "man of blood" abhorred by the Psalms and elsewhere in the Bible, but he scarcely can be assimilated to biblical villainy. There is nothing specifically anti-Christian in his crimes; they would offend virtually every vision of the sacred and the moral that human chronicle has known…Macbeth's tragedy, like Hamlet's, Lear's and Othello's is so universal that a strictly Christian context is inadequate to it. (1999, p. 519)

By his treason and usurpation of the throne, as Bloom suggests, Macbeth abandons a natural good embedded in him. We may call this natural good Christian, but "Christianity is a revealed religion, and Macbeth rebels against nature as he *imagines* it" (Bloom, 1999, p. 521). Hence, unnatural occurrences in the play can be seen as the reflection of Macbeth's falling away from his own nature, not from Christianity.

Against his disposition, Macbeth takes the Machiavellian route. In contrast to Duncan, he sets on a course that would require him to embody the (in)famous models Machiavelli set for an effective rule. It is interesting to note that Machiavelli never mentions natural law or natural justice, "the two conceptions of justice that had been handed down to his time and that could be found in the writings on this subject of all his contemporaries" (Mansfield, 1998, p. 12). Accordingly, he does not include justice in the eleven pairs of moral qualities that he lists in Chapter 15. Justice is basically out of the question - thus, it is better to leave it unformulated - as men cannot afford justice in any sense that "transcends their own preservation". Since Machiavelli sought to "go directly to the effectual truth of the thing rather than the imagination of it" (Mansfield, p.10), his propositions can be considered to constitute an assault on the dominant classical and Christian doctrines of his time. Unlike Machiavelli, these always fell back on the construction of an "imagined" republic as an analogy when elaborating a concept of morality. Moreover, Machiavelli did not permit an inquiry into the part of conscience or pangs of remorse in the making of political decisions. If at all possible, justice is to be considered identical with necessity, that is, the rules and laws that actually *exist* are neither natural nor eternal, but contingent. They are "those made by governments or other powers acting under necessity, and they must be obeyed out of the same necessity" (Mansfield, p. 11). What follows this assumption should be a clarification as to the

manner in which power is acquired in the fist place: either by inheritance – which is the "natural" way – or by acquisition, that is, "conquest". However, when Machiavelli – as if to account for Macbeth—adds, "Truly it is a very natural and ordinary thing to desire to acquire", it is clear that he deviates from the "natural" and leans toward the acquisitive. After all, there can be no "natural" inheritance without assuming an original acquisition perhaps through violence and murder that precede all and thus paves the way for either future inheritance or acquisition. Thus Macbeth claims:

> Blood hath been shed ere now, i' th' olden time,
> Ere humane statute purged the gentle weal;
> Ay, and since too, murders have been performed
> Too terrible for the ear. (3.4.91-94)

However, "bloody conquest" does not put an end to Macbeth's fears, since the dead return to push the living from their stools, reclaiming their spot, which was destined to be theirs. Banquo's ghost can be considered to be symbolic of Macbeth's own conscience which he unsuccessfully tried to repress by applying what amounts to Machiavellian precepts to seize power and retain his status as king. Macbeth, at least until he decides to get rid of Banquo and his son Fleance, 'seemingly' does have a conscience. Banquo's ghost, like Julius Caesar's specter, epitomizes the "*personified* voice of conscience" –rather than a personalized, "internal voice of conscience"- that "can be traced back to Senecan tragedies" (Ratmoko, 2006, p. 95). Perplexed with the appearance of Banquo's ghost, Macbeth says:

> The time has been
> That, when the brains were out, men would die,
> And there an end. But now they rise again
> With twenty mortal murders on their crowns
> And push us from our stools. This is more strange
> Than such a murder is. (3.4.95-99)

For Macbeth, however dreadful it may sound, murders have been performed not only "i' th' olden time", prior to the time when "humane statute purg'd the gentle weal", but also after the benevolence of law refined the society and made it gentler. Therefore, since it is both at the origin and the aftermath of the law, what appears to be strictly "unnatural" is not acquisition but the appearance of Banquo's ghost. To Macbeth, the rising of the dead, like other great perturbations of nature that occur throughout the play, is stranger than the act of murder itself: Numbed with horror, he cannot deal with the fact that what he is witnessing is a visible emblem of his guilt and his awareness that he has committed awful deeds. Moreover, what Macbeth perhaps fails to see here is the possibility that somebody – not necessarily Banquo's ghost – will eventually rise to push him off his stool is just as 'natural'.

Macbeth's portrayal at the very beginning is marked by courage and military prowess, qualities that Machiavelli deems necessary for a successful prince. *Virtù* might be the best term that presents Machiavelli's view with regards to the necessities of power politics. Very different from "virtue" that conventionally connotes moral goodness, the concept of *virtù* conveys all the personal traits that the prince needs to possess to "achieve great things". *Virtù* bids the prince to be impetuous and flexible according to the time or situation: The prince should have a flexible disposition, that is, he should be able to vary his conduct from good to evil and back again "as fortune and circumstances dictate". Machiavelli also uses the term *virtù* to describe the military tactics of the courageous general who can adapt to different battlefield conditions in his book *The Art of War*.

Usually translated as "fortune", *Fortuna* is another central Machiavellian concept. Machiavelli supposes that "half of the world is governed by fortune and half is by man", and compares fortune to "a violent river that can be contained with dikes

and dams" (Mansfield, 1998, p. 13). However, this does not mean that human beings do not have any control over Fortuna. One can resist her, but it is better to be impetuous than cautious, because "Fortuna is a woman, it is necessary, in order to keep her under, to beat and maul her" (Machiavelli, trans. 1998, p. 95).

The captain, announcing the news of Macbeth's success in battle, remarks that Macbeth has killed rebellious Macdonwald and rendered the Goddess Fortuna, who in granting the rebel her favors "showed like a rebel's whore" (1.2.17), ineffective:

> The merciless Macdonwald
> (Worthy to be a rebel, for to that
> The multiplying villainies of nature
> Do swarm upon him) from the Western Isles
> Of kerns and gallowglasses is supplied;
> And Fortune, on his damned quarrel smiling,
> Showed like a rebel's whore. But all's too weak;
> For brave Macbeth (well he deserves that name),
> Disdaining Fortune, with his brandished steel,
> Which smoked with bloody execution. (1.2.18-20)

Therefore, Macbeth, unlike Macdonwald who owes his fleeting success and subsequent downfall to the fickleness of Fortune, subdues her and emerges as a successful practitioner of *virtù,* antithetical male force to *Fortuna.*

Macbeth seems to be aware that the act of murdering his king is a violation on many levels as he himself admits:

> He's here in double trust:
> First, as I am his kinsman and his subject,
> Strong both against the deed; then, as his host,
> Who should against his murderer shut the door,
> Not bear the knife myself" (1.7.12-16)

Duncan, according to Macbeth, is "so clear in his office" that he stands as a saintly figure who has always exercised his power with modesty and compassion. Macbeth

juxtaposes his “horrid deed” for which he has no justification other than “vaulting ambition” with Duncan’s virtues which “will plead like angels” against his own devilish villainy. Considering that Macbeth knowingly discarded moral values to seize political power like a Machiavellian figure would do, we would expect him to act according to the principles laid out by Machiavelli to consolidate his power. However, we also know that his brief reference to “vaulting ambition” does not really present us with a palpable motive and the sheer determination that should accompany the deed he is about to perform:

> I have no spur
> To prick the sides of my intent, but only
> Vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itself
> And falls on th’ other- (1.7. 25-28)

Macbeth, in describing his ambition with the metaphor of a horse jumping a hurdle, is aware that his action is bound to be a self-defeating one. He does not have the spur to stimulate his intention – except ambition. Macbeth’s usage of the horse metaphor has been generally interpreted in two ways: Either as an over-enthusiastic rider vaulting into his saddle but overshooting the mark and falling on the other side of the horse, or as the rider and the horse together overshooting the mark and falling on the other side while trying to jump a hurdle. When the “bloody captain” gives an account of Macbeth’s victory, we get a description of Macbeth as a kind of killing machine, yet one with great valor and skill. By contrast, the image Macbeth evokes in our minds when he describes his intention to murder Duncan – which is an act of treason that requires political thought and strategy rather than physical strength – is far from a man who is the embodiment of *virtù*. The act he is about to perform requires him to excel in cunning intelligence and calculation: However, too eager a rider, he lacks the political skill to calculate, thus presents us with the comic figure of an over-

enthusiastic rider. Likewise, the image Macbeth's metaphor evokes is notably different from the way Duncan portrays him as he greets his hostess, Lady Macbeth:

> Where's the Thane of Cawdor?
> We coursed him at the heels and had a purpose
> To be his purveyor; but he rides well,
> And his great love, sharp as his spur, hath helped him
> To his home before us. Fair and noble hostess,
> We are your guest tonight. (1.6.25-30)

Duncan remarks with unconscious irony on Macbeth's love for his king, which makes him eagerly outride the king and arrive at Inverness earlier to welcome his royal guest. Though Macbeth pricks his 'real' horse's side to make him run faster, he lacks the "sharp spur" to "prick the sides" of his will, that is, his metaphorical horse, to kill Duncan. These two radically different images highlight his political ineptitude and his initial lack of firmness of purpose.

Macbeth is in tune with Machiavelli's answer to the question whether it is more fitting to be feared or loved – provided that the prince has to select one over the other: In Chapter 17, Machiavelli says: "Because it is difficult to put them together it is much safer to be feared than loved" (trans. 1998, p. 66). Macbeth's reign is indeed so fearful that it disrupts the ordinary course of life, and the stability of political and social life is lost. As the representative of the common voice, an anonymous lord says that they yearn for the day Macduff -- the main foil to Macbeth-- King Edward and Malcolm will form an alliance to overthrow Macbeth:

> Thither Macduff
> Is gone to pray the holy king upon his aid
> To wake Northumberland and warlike Siward
> That, by the help of these (with Him above
> To ratify the work), we may again
> Give to our tables meat, sleep to our nights.
> Free from our feasts and banquets bloody knives,
> Do faithful homage, and receive free honours,
> All which we pine for now." (3.6.33-41)

In keeping with Machiavelli's statement in Chapter 18 that "men in general judge more by their eyes than by their hands… so let a prince win and maintain a state: the means will always be judged honorable, and will be praised by everyone" (p. 71), Lady Macbeth tries to persuade Macbeth by taunting his unmanly weakness as he wavers because of the thought of losing his reputation which has been newly enhanced by the king's declaration that he is the Thane of Cawdor: "Golden opinions from all sorts of people, / which would be worn now in their newest gloss" (1.7.36-37). By pointing out the gap between daring and doing, valor and action, desire and attainment, Lady Macbeth favors Machiavelli's notion that "reputation is an outward conformity to successful human force and has no reference to moral rules that the government might find inconvenient" (Mansfield, p. 25). Therefore, one's reputation is meaningful as long as it is crowned by successful human force and fulfillment of what is desired, for it is worse to "live a coward in thine own esteem" (1.7.47).

Macbeth's and Lady Macbeth's preoccupation with outward appearances is conveyed with numerous references to role-playing, staging, clothing and disguise as instruments of political manipulation. Since Macbeth appears to be "too full o' th' milk of human kindness to catch the nearest way", Lady Macbeth fears that he will not be able to "perform" the role of a loyal and honorable subject. Hence, she utters the following lines which strikingly capture Machiavelli's paradigms:

> Your face, my thane, is as a book where men
> May read strange matters. To beguile the time,
> Look like the time. Bear welcome in your eye,
> Your hand, your tongue. Look like th' innocent flower,
> But be the serpent under 't. (1.5.73-77)

"To beguile the time, look like the time" and "look like th' innocent flower, but be the serpent under't" are the essential and effective principles that are to be followed

to successfully seize the crown. These imperatives will resonate throughout the play: Macbeth soon explains his decisiveness to enact "this terrible feat" in similar terms of "feigning" and "staging":

> I am settled, and bend up
> Each corporal agent to this terrible feat.
> Away, and mock the time with fairest show.
> False face must hide what the false heart doth know. (1.7.92-96)

From Machiavelli's perspective, one can suggest that one of the most significant qualities king Duncan lacks is the ability to discern his lieges' intentions, always judging them on the basis of the image they choose to project, thus making himself vulnerable to all sorts of manipulation. Speaking of the thane of Cawdor's betrayal, Duncan ironically admits:

> There's no art
> To find the mind's construction in the face.
> He was a gentleman on whom I built
> An absolute trust. (1.4.13-16)

Macbeth, in deciding to murder Duncan, is very much aware that a bad reputation should be avoided. This is why he later employs men to perform his murders covertly. However, as it turns out, he cannot help losing his reputation as the play progresses: People around him use clothing imagery with reference to usurpation and subsequent tyranny: "Now does he feel his title/ Hang loose about him, like a giant's robe/ Upon a dwarfish thief" (5.2-23-25). They not only define him as a thief who usurped the kingship, but also as a "dwarfish thief" who lacks the grandeur of a king and the capacity to realize the power that naturally comes with the "giant's robe" he has stolen.

The instability that permeates political and social life in *Macbeth* is prophetically in line with Hobbes' political ideas. Hobbes, in his *Leviathan*,

published approximately 25 years after *Macbeth* was first performed, is concerned with bringing order to the chaotic civil war in England. Hobbes' goal was to provide a new foundation for political stability through his 'scientific' materialism that would serve to obtain an indisputable and solid knowledge of human action, thought and perception. Like Machiavelli who anticipates him in quite a few respects, Hobbes supports the idea of a secular monarch. In his chapter titled "Of the Difference of Manners", Hobbes states: "There is no such finis ultimus (utmost aim), nor summum bonum (greatest good), as is spoken of in the books of the old moral philosophers" (1991, p. 70). Instincts and passions are major features of human nature. Hence, Hobbes claims: "I put for a general inclination of all human kind, a perpetual and restless desire of power after power that ceaseth only after death" (p. 71). However, men's passions and the way in which they act towards the object of their desire are highly diverse, which makes living in unity and peace in the absence of a ruling body impossible:

> Felicity is a continual progress of the desire from one object to another, the attaining of the former being still but the way to the latter. The cause whereof is that the object of man's desire is not to enjoy once only and for one instant of time, but to assure for ever the way of his future desire. And therefore the voluntary actions and inclinations of all men tend not only to the procuring, but also to the assuring, of a contented life, and differ only in the way; which ariseth partly from the diversity of passions in divers men, and partly from the difference of the knowledge or opinion each one has of the causes him produce the effect desired. (p. 70)

Since greed and self-preservation-- striving to avoid a violent death-- are self-evident axioms about human beings, the fundamental and natural *right* of a person is survival, that is, ensuring self-preservation and leading a commodious life and acting "greedily" to this effect. As a result, in the pre-political state of nature where passions are unchecked, death is a natural condition. Instead of the idea of being

subjected to a divinely ordained sovereignty, Hobbes upheld a relatively secular notion of morality built solely on interest – rather than the idea of moral virtue that is taken to be obedience to divine law inscribed in the human conscience. According to Hobbes, natural *law*, by the very virtue of being inferable by human reason without the aid of religion or revelation, bids us to enter a covenant and make a social contract with the sovereign, though, not a divinely ordained sovereign, to live up to the most fundamental right, which is self-preservation and survival. Similarly, before a cosmological barrenness takes over with the act of regicide, we have a sense of a social contract in *Macbeth*. Upon acknowledging Duncan's reward, Macbeth's lines echo the mutual bonds the social contract brings forth:

> Our duties
> Are to your throne and state, children and servants,
> Which do but what they should by doing everything
> Safe toward your love and honor (1.4.24-27)

The execution of Charles I terrified Hobbes because it meant the total dissolution and death of the body politic: The sovereign's body is representative of an imagined eternity; in its entirety it is synonymous with the commonwealth and all the people that make up a nation. If the people who are supposed to face the sovereign with fear and reverence engage in regicide, then the law, that is, that great bond which binds people together through reciprocal obligations, does not hold anymore. Likewise, in 3.2 Macbeth sets out to "cancel and tear to pieces that great bond" which keeps him "pale". Not confiding his plan to murder Banquo to Lady Macbeth, Macbeth tells his wife not to concern herself in advance about an event she will "applaud" when it has happened:

> Come, seeling night
> Scarf up the tender eye of pitiful day
> And with thy bloody and invisible hand
> Cancel and tear to pieces that great bond

> Which keeps me pale.
> ….
> Thou marvell'st at my words, but hold thee still;
> Things bad begun, make strong themselves by ill. (3.2.46-55)

"Bond", as well as referring to "Bonquo's bond of life", that is, his very existence, refers to a contract, legal commitment and obligation. The phrase "to cancel that great bond" embraces all the moral, social and political obligations that Macbeth has violated so far. He will continue this violation insofar as he believes that "things bad begun, make strong themselves by ill". Macbeth's determination is highly reminiscent of a Senecan *sententia*, the Latin aphorism, "per scelera semper sceleribus tutum est iter", translated as "the only safe path from bad deeds is through bad deeds" (as cited in Burrow, 2013, p.188). Here, Macbeth seems to be engaging in an act of self-persuasion: The only way to make the plan he embarked upon stronger is to carry it through by doing more ill. Not only has he performed a 'bad' deed, but he has also performed it 'badly', that is, ineffectively. Even though he seems to know it to be deeply wrong, he can only secure himself by committing more and more murders inasmuch as he has already reached the point of no return. Since "things bad begun, make strong themselves by ill", Macbeth is forced to continue on his course of action that will lead to repeated bloodshed:

> I am in blood
> Stepped in so far that, should I wade no more,
> Returning were as tedious as go o'er. (3.4.135-7)

The fact that Macbeth *needs* to resort to more and more 'bloody conquests' to secure his position indicates that he fails to abide by the principle of 'the economy of violence'. According to Machiavelli, correct political action requires the prince to institute an economy of violence. This principle highlights the significance and the

necessity of achieving the most effective results through minimal investment. However, as the play develops, Macbeth's radical actions - murdering Duncan and Banquo and later Macduff's family - turn out to be highly ineffective insofar as he becomes increasingly paranoid. Not only has he murdered the peace of his community but also his own inner peace: "O, full of scorpions is my mind, dear wife! / Thou know'st that Banquo and his Fleance lives" (3.2.41-42).

Though Macbeth finds it easier to perform them as the play progresses, each action leaves a more troubling residue he has to get rid of. Regarding "cruelty" and the use of violence for a successful rule, Machiavelli writes in his Chapter 8 (Of those who have attained principality through crimes):

> We can say that cruelty is used well (if it is permissible to talk in this way of what is evil) when it is employed once for all, and one's safety depends on it, and then it is not persisted in but as far as possible turned to the good of one's subjects [...] Whoever does otherwise is always under necessity to hold a knife in his hand; nor can one ever found himself on his subjects if, because of fresh and continued injuries, they cannot be secure against him. *Violence must be inflicted once for all*; people will then forget what it tastes like and so be less resentful. Benefits must be conferred gradually; and in that way they will taste better. (trans. 1998, p. 37-38)

Well-used cruelties are done once and effectively whereas badly-used cruelties – in Macbeth's words, "things bad begun"- tend to continue and increase, finally leading to disorder that will do harm to everybody.

To his subjects, "badly-used cruelties" act as a constant reminder of the presence of a tyrannous ruler invoking the feeling of chaos. The sense of chaos in *Macbeth* prevails not only in the microcosm. Happenings referred to by Ross and an old man are "unnatural, even like the deed that's done", echoing at all levels of the macrocosm. Disruption of the hierarchy and order that makes a harmonious community is reflected in the cosmological anarchy that dominates the play in the aftermath of Duncan's murder. Anarchy, fractured time and pervasive violence

mirror the Hobbesian state of nature. *Macbeth* provides a literary version of Hobbes' state of nature that is characterized by the absence of a legitimate ruling body: Night lingers into the day. Subversion of the hierarchical order, anarchy and the sense of chaos that unfold are manifested in the animal realm: An owl, bird of night, instead of catching mice on the ground, goes up and preys on a falcon, a day creature and a royal companion, "towering in her pride of place" (2.4.12). As Hobbes sees the dissolution of the body politics as ultimately self-destructive – inasmuch as the king's body stands for the commonwealth – the motif of self-destructiveness in the play is conveyed with the horses that eat each other:

> ROSS. And Duncan's horses (a thing most strange and certain),
> Beauteous and swift, the minions of their race,
> Turned wild in nature, broke their stalls, flung out,
> Contending 'gainst obedience, as they would
> Make war with mankind.
> OLD MAN. 'Tis said they eat each other.
> ROSS. They did so, to th' amazement of mine eyes
> That looked upon't. (2.4.17-26)

The paradox of the political subject which stems from Hobbes' conception of the sovereign that both necessitates and subsequently delimits individual autonomy for its maintenance is also salient in *Macbeth*. Since subjects both assume an active role in producing the sovereign by making a contract with him and also a passive role in willingly subjecting themselves to the sovereign they have produced, the dichotomy of activity and passivity is central to the formation and the sustenance of the commonwealth. Early in the play, Macbeth –not yielding to the latter part of the meaning of subjecthood, that is, subjecting oneself to the power of the sovereign –is the party who does not honor this contract. In deciding to strip himself of the limitations on his autonomy, Macbeth paradoxically renders himself vulnerable to the instability and fragility of political life. He finds that he is susceptible to an order

that can be easily challenged by subjects' disavowal of the sovereign's unlimited power.

Though embodying the image of a Machiavellian overreacher in the tradition of *de facto*, the story of Macbeth is rather the decline of a transgressor. Macbeth's Machiavellian ambitions are not fulfilled to the extent of turning him into a successful *de facto* prince. Likewise, the course of action he pursues to seize power is the very strategy that makes him liable to fall, which anticipates Hobbes' paradox of the political subject. Macbeth's initial action and what follows after lie bare the inner structure of sovereignty which allows us to read the play against the grain. *Macbeth* exposes the paradoxes inherent in sovereign power and the instability of political "truths".

Macbeth starts his political carrier as a Machiavellian overreacher. Because he is not fully equipped with the characteristics that are essential for the maintenance of political power, he fails when he "confronts literal prophesy, recorded history and cyclical nature" (Watson, 2003, p. 315). He might be an overreacher, yet turning into a mechanical killer in an attempt to consolidate his power, Macbeth cannot reach beyond the literal meaning of the witches' prophesies. In this sense, Macbeth's failure to interpret the prophesies of the witches that "lie like truth" (5.5.50) can also be interpreted as his incapacity to successfully operate on the "equivocal" and slippery ground of power politics.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

Using the metaphor of the 'state of man', Macbeth verbalizes how, owing to conflicting impulses, his state, his very seat of being has been shaken and the harmony between his faculties has been disrupted. The resulting disharmony and anarchy in his inner state mirrors the chaos and mayhem that will reign over the commonwealth and over the entirety of nature following the severance of the most vital bond of loyalty by the murder of the supreme organ of the community: the king. Macbeth's awareness that he is violating all the ethical norms put forth by his society requires him to cling to his imagination so that he can hide the atrocity of his deed both from himself and from the world. Equivocation and his 'moralizing' imagination are the instruments he employs to hide his deeds from the scrutiny of the public and of his conscience which appears to pain him. Macbeth's power of imagination lends itself to a comparison with the imagination of Hamlet who, unlike Macbeth, uses it as a delaying tactic. At this point it is useful to compare Macbeth to another assassinator, Brutus, who shares similar conflicting impulses with Macbeth, and who, using the same metaphor, articulates a similar disharmony experienced in the inner state of man and the outer state of the commonwealth. Akin to Macbeth's "horrible imaginings", Brutus' mind is host to "a phantasm or a hideous dream":

> The genius and the mortal instruments
> Are then in council, and the state of man,
> Like to a little kingdom, suffers then
> The nature of an insurrection. (Shakespeare, 2004, 1.2.68-71)

Several parallels can be drawn between Macbeth and Brutus with regards to their inner discord and the way they articulate their inward division. While Macbeth's division has been instigated by his contact with the witches and later urged on by

Lady Macbeth's efficacious rhetoric, it is Cassius who 'whets' Brutus against Caesar. However, as Banquos' reaction "why do you start and seem to fear/ Things that do sound so fair?" (1.3.54-55) tells us, Macbeth's first reaction to the witches' predictions is somewhat peculiar. "Though his first fearful reaction (1.3.54) is left unexplained, for us to fill in as we will", Snyder (1992) suggests, "surely one way to read his fear is that the word 'king' touches a buried desire" (p. 202). And by the same token, Snyder argues that the witches' function is to crystallize Macbeth's secret thoughts of the crown into objective possibility just when he has hit new heights of success, captaining Duncan's armies and defeating Duncan's enemies. All in all, this is the "psychologically right moment to confront Macbeth with their predictions of greatness" (Snyder, p. 202). Brutus too has been lately troubled with "passions of some difference, / conceptions only proper to myself" (1.2.42-43). As he tells Cassius, he is already "with himself at war" (1.2.46).

The witches who "have more in them than mortal knowledge" (1.5.3) have told Macbeth what he is going *to be*, yet what he has not been told is what *to do*. Though the witches have often been associated with evil forces by critics, their predictions are morally neutral. They do not stand for an external source of evil that forces or instigates Macbeth to act in a certain way. However, this is not to suggest that the witches are mere figments of Macbeth's imagination since Banquo sees them as well: They are supernatural powers, and they might be responsible for – indirectly- shaping Macbeth's destiny, but they are not supernatural powers that guide Macbeth's way to the "golden round". The witches might have more than mortal knowledge in themselves; however; it is Macbeth who provides the 'instructions' and 'directions' for the realization of the future he has been told to have. The existence of the witches in the play can be considered to correlate with the

Greek term *daimon,* a platonic and neo-platonic mythological conception. Like Socrates' "daimons" who "warned him of bad decisions and danger but never directed him what to do" (Guiley, 2008, p. 94), the witches' prophesies are void of a clear direction. Similar to the Latin 'genius', an attendant spirit allotted to a person at birth, Greek *daimon* – which evolved into "demon" that became highly popular during the reign of King James I thanks to him and his tome on *Daemonologie* (1599) - was originally neither good nor evil, but was merely a ministering, indwelling guardian spirit and "an intermediary being that existed between the world of gods and the world of man" (Guiley, p. 94). The daimons, unlike Gods who had full power in shaping one's destiny, have limited powers since their force in man's life and fate depends on men's active power as well. Heraclitus, with regards to the daimon's function in men's life, considered *daimon* as the force "at work within men helping to shape his life and revealing its nature in the *ethos* [character] of each man" (as cited in Langis, 2013, p. 2). Similarly, Florentine humanist Ficino interpreted the *daimon* as an external agency that needed to be counterbalanced with one's proper agency (Langis, p. 2). It is not the witches, the "wayward sisters", who actually direct Macbeth to murderous acts or prevent him from achieving salutary ends. Though they increase Macbeth's torment by their equivocal prophecies and later revel in his fall, they do not act as instruments of a power that causes devastation and suffering. Just like their unidentifiable appearances that defy any categorization, the witches have the power of disturbing the 'logocentric' universe where the distinction between 'fair' and 'foul' has been clearly drawn: "Fair is foul, and foul is fair" (1.1.12). Macbeth, who later proves to be a great equivocator himself, utters these same words even though he has not yet heard the witches. Macbeth speaks in the same terms as the witches to refer to the ambiguous nature of the weather and the

shifting tide of the battle: “So foul and fair a day I have not seen” (1.3.39). This re-doubling of the two key words implies more than a mere repetition of diction. It suggests that there is a bond between him and the witches, who, rather than standing for the objective existence of ‘evil’, “symbolize the workings of evil in the hearts of men” (Muir, 1964, p.70).

Brutus hears no such supernatural predictions and the weather which proleptically reflects the chaos to follow is interpreted by Brutus and Cassius as natural. Yet both are uneasy. In contemplating their proposed acts, Brutus’ soliloquies reflect his unease, vacillation and distress in his complex, rambling and fragmented discourse. In Macbeth’s arguments we sense a man who is hopelessly trying to get his motives clear for which he can find no better name than ‘ambition’. This is often interpreted as the ‘motivational void’ in him, that is, the absence of a proper psychological motivation. Macbeth’s mindset differs from that of Brutus in that Macbeth seeks no justification while Brutus’ soliloquy is geared towards finding a satisfactory justification:

> It must be by his death, and for my part
> I know no personal cause to spurn at him
> But for the general. He would be crowned.
> How that might change his nature, there’s the question.
> It is the bright day that brings forth the adder
> And that craves wary walking. Crown him that,
> And then I grant we put a sting in him
> That at his will he may do danger with. (2.1.10-17)

Brutus, in marshalling arguments for his intended course of action, puts the possible consequences into the foreground to relieve his troubled conscience. Knowing “no personal cause to spurn at Ceasar”, he claims to take the best interest of his country into account to support his argument: His decision to join the conspirators to assassinate Caesar is neither for envy or greed nor for upgrading his own social and

political standing. Following a self-delusional argument, he supposedly has a cause that is higher than his love for Caesar: "why Brutus rose against Caesar, this is my answer: not that I loved Caesar less, but that I loved Rome more" (3.2.22-24). However, as Brutus himself accepts, Caesar does not really fit into the description of a tyrant as laid out by Renaissance political theory: He is neither "a usurper *ex defecto tituli,* with no right to the throne", nor "a tyrant *ex parte exercitii,* who whatever their legal entitlement, governed viciously, making their will the law" (Chernaik, 2011, p. 98). "Since the quarrel will bear no color for what he is", Brutus proceeds by constructing a hypothesis according to what Caesar might become: Before having a chance to display any tyrannous tendencies, one should "think [Caesar] as a serpent's egg" and he has to be killed "in the shell" (2.1.32). Brutus has no hard evidence that Caesar intends to make himself king of Rome. He convinces himself by 'imagining' a possibility: Caesar *might* be a tyrant in the future as the crown *might* change his nature. Macbeth, as shown in his soliloquies, is honest with himself in that he can find no justification for the evil deed he is about to perform.

Brutus is always conscious of being on the stage, as in Act 3 Scene 1. Macbeth too feels that man is an actor on the stage of life. In the end, he stages his death in the antique fashion, fighting to the end with his back against the wall. Left to fight Malcolm's troop by himself, he refuses to give up. By this time, life has no meaning left for Macbeth:

> Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow,
> 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. Out, out, brief candle!
> Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
> That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
> And then is heard no more. It is a tale
> Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
> Signifying nothing. (5.5.22-31)

A.C. Bradley remarks that Macbeth sets about his first murder "as if it were an appalling duty" (1905, p. 108). "Appalling" might be an appropriate word to describe the way in which the deed he is about to perform registers in his mind inasmuch as Macbeth falls short of what is known as "diabolical evil": "No less sublime than moral duty", Cutrofello (2014) says, "is what Kant calls diabolical evil" (p. 63). Diabolical evil is a principled commitment to evil for evil's sake – the unattainable evil ideal. Analogous to the moral ideal associated with Christ's "holiness of will" is Satan's diabolical evil to which we might be tempted to aspire. Just as Christ's will is an ideal which we cannot live up to since the most we can hope to achieve is "a virtuous commitment to subordinate our desire for happiness to our respect for the law", diabolical evil is bound to remain an (evil) ideal which is "unattainable" (Cutrofello, p. 63). Lady Macbeth is perhaps closer than her husband to Kant's term. Commanding the spirits that "tend upon mortal thoughts" to fill her with "direst cruelty", Lady Macbeth tries to suppress her conscience and seeks to align the entirety of her existence – body and soul – with diabolical evil.

Macbeth, while trying to evade his conscience, is overwhelmed by the evil nature of act which he is about to perform and is led towards his first crime by a "dagger of the mind". Losing his moral sense and 'conscience, Macbeth commits his other crimes with increasing ease. In response to young Siward who says, "the devil himself could not pronounce a title / More hateful to mine hear" (5.7.10-11), Macbeth claims, "No, nor more fearful" (5.7.12).

In the beginning Macbeth was a man who appeared to be overwhelmed by the evil nature of the murder he was about to perform. In the end, he has become a man who aspires to overwhelm whoever stands in his way with (diabolical?) evil. Doing so, he has lost all human feelings. Once he was a man who was devoid of any

palpable motivation other than ambition, now he has become a man whose life is permeated with nothingness, an unfathomable void.

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