

CHAPTER FIFTY-NINE



IT WOULD APPEAR to have been while Oxford was living at Fisher's Folly, in the year following the death of his wife, that he wrote *Macbeth*. Whether this was one of the plays given by the Paul's Boys—for the Oxford Boys—during the season of 1580-90, at Richmond, cannot be positively said. But it is not surprising that he wrote this gloomy tragedy at such a time; seemingly one of the

least subjective of all his dramas, though no doubt more so than is generally suspected.

The source of *Macbeth* is exceedingly complex, as is that of *King Lear*, which was written soon afterwards. Because we wish to go somewhat fully into *Lear*—a drama more immediately and pervasively personal to Lord Oxford—we shall merely skim the surface of *Macbeth*, although for atmosphere, dramatic tension, and poetic beauty, to say nothing of implicit revelation of the quality of its author, it seems to us one of the greatest of the plays. There have been many excellent analyses of this dour Scottish tragedy of ruthless ambition, but each one leaves out a great deal. They could all be combined and, even then, would fail to do justice to the masterly synchronization of historic personages and events with philosophical truth, which Lord Oxford achieved here, thus making his tragic figures, in accordance with Aristotle's precept, larger than life.

Historically, *Macbeth* is based in part upon Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland*, and in part upon a rare manuscript written by hand, entitled *Buik of Cronicles of Scotland*, which was commissioned by Queen Margaret, daughter of Henry VII, for the education of her young son, James V. By her second marriage, to Archibald Douglas, this Queen had a daughter, whom her uncle, Henry VIII, married to the Earl of Lennox in 1554. The Lennoxes were friends of Lord Oxford, having been often at Theobalds when he was there, notably in 1574, for supper parties.¹

The Earl and Countess of Lennox were the parents of the ill-starred Darnley, who married Mary Stuart. And the murder of Darnley by the ambitious Bothwell furnishes a third historical basis for the play. An important character in *Macbeth*, although he appears in none of the chronicles, is Lennox, who, while one of the principal accusers (III.6), behaves with the same fearful caution that the real Lennox was obliged to practice after his son's murder.

Still another historical basis for *Macbeth*—contemporary history this time—was the murder, on December 23, 1588, of Henry Duke of Guise, called the King of Paris, by Henry III of France at his castle at Blois, while his mother, Catherine de' Medici, was staying there. Catherine, distressed by the reproaches of Cardinal Bourbon for her policy which had led to the present mischief, and harassed by the troubles which she foresaw as a result of her son's deed, fell into a fever and died less than two weeks after the murder of Guise and only seven months before the assassination of her son, which she had foreseen as inevitable.² The dramatist derives material from

another occasion also in the career of the French Queen, as we shall show.

It is evident that Lord Oxford had been reading *The Weeks*, of du Bartas; for—as he will be seen to have done in *King Lear*—he drew upon the 2d Week, *The Furies*, where the following passage occurs:

As the heat hidden in a vapory cloud
Striving for issue with strange murmurs loud,
Like guns astuns with round, round-rumbling thunder,
Filling the air with noise, the earth with wonder.
So the three sisters, the three hideous rages,
Raise thousand storms, leaving th' infernal stages.

The heads of dragon, dog, ounce, bear and bull,
Wolf, lion, horse, of strength and stomach-full.³

In *Macbeth* we have the witches' chant (IV.1):

First Witch. Round about the cauldron go.

Second Witch. Eye of newt, and toe of frog,
Wool of bat, and tongue of dog,
Adder's fork, and blind-worm's sting,
Lizard's leg and howlet's wing.

Third Witch. Scale of dragon, tooth of wolf,
Witches' mummy, maw and gulf . . .

Another passage in *The Furies*, suggestive of the weird and terrible atmosphere of black night and foul deeds which pervades the drama, reads thus:

This echo made all hell to tremble, troubled,
The drowsy night her deep, dark horrors doubled.

Macbeth says (III.2.50-3):

. . . Light thickens, and the crow
Makes things of day begin to droop and drowse,
While night's black agents to their preys do rouse.

The Weeks also refers more than once to the "King's evil," as a disease which is inherited. And this is as good a time as any to say that the commentators who believe *Macbeth* was written some six or seven years after James ascended the throne of England, have grievously erred. There is absolutely nothing in *Macbeth* which could not have been written between 1588 and '91. While Oxford might have

¹ Chap. Nine.

² E.T.C.: *Hidd. All.*, p. 586.

³ Joshua Sylvester's translation was published in 1590. Lord Oxford would, of course, already have read du Bartas in the original, since he kept an account of French and Italian works. Incidentally, Edith Hamilton has observed that neither Sophocles nor Euripides ever wrote anything which so closely resembles the *Orestes* of Aeschylus as *Macbeth* does.

elaborated the passages about touching for the King's evil (IV.3.139-59) and about "two-fold balls and treble sceptres" (IV.1.121) in 1609, to bring the play up to date, this is unlikely.⁴ (The scene between Malcolm and Macduff is before the palace of the King; that is, of Edward the Confessor. This pious monarch instituted the practice of touching to cure the malady called "the King's evil"; it was continued for seven hundred years, ceasing only with George I, while lasting in France until 1776.) In the 1589 version, the latter passage could have referred to Henry of Navarre and Béarn, who, after becoming King Henry IV in that very year, continued to rule those separate principalities until they became part of France. However, according to Sir E. K. Chambers, the "two-fold balls" are the "mounds" borne on the English and Scottish crowns and the "treble sceptres" are "the two used for investiture in the English coronation and the one used in the Scottish coronation."

As for the "farmer that hanged himself on the expectation of plenty" (II.3.4-5), this must have been a well-known jest by 1598, for Ben Jonson applied it in that year to Sordido, who represents John Shakesper of Stratford, in *Every Man Out*. In the matter of the much-discussed equivocator that could swear in both scales against either scale; who committed treason enough for God's sake, yet could not equivocate to heaven (II.3.8-11)—why should he necessarily be Father Garnet, prosecuted in connection with the Gunpowder plot of 1606, when the Jesuits had been called equivocators, because of their doctrine of equivocation, ever since Campion had arrived in England in 1580, and had come into notoriety in 1586 with the Jesuit priest's, Ballard's, promotion of the Babington plot?

One more topical allusion that may be mentioned here is the First Witch's,

Her husband's to Aleppo gone, master o' the Tiger. (I.3.7)

It seems that in 1589 Elizabeth was hoping to induce "the Grand Turk" to send a fleet against the King of Spain; and a Fugger News-Letter stated that on November 18 an envoy had departed for Constantinople to enlist his aid.⁵

⁴ Agnes Strickland says, in her account of Elizabeth's visit to Kenilworth in 1575, "Lanham declares . . . that her majesty, with her accustomed charity and mercy, cured nine persons of the painful disease called the 'king's evil,' which the kings and queens of this realm heal, without other medicine, but only by touching and prayers do cure,"—p. 310.

In the statement that *Macbeth* contains nothing inconsistent with the date 1588-91, with a possibility of interpolation or alteration of the two allusions in 1609, we are corroborated by the eminent Stratfordian commentator, Cairncross: *The Problem of Hamlet*, p. 173. He also bears out our statement about the "equivocator." Prof. Dover Wilson, too, has stated that *Macbeth* could well have been written not later than 1603. Even Dowden says all of *Macbeth* could have been written by 1603.

⁵ *Fugger News-Letters*, 2d Series, p. 198.

The Tiger was a famous old ship, upon which, a year earlier, following the defeat of the Armada, (Oxford's friend) Frobisher had hoisted his flag and sailed up and down the Flemish coast, capturing wheat-laden ships bound for Spain, taking them into London River to feed the starving navy men.⁶ Cairncross found, upon examination of the Port Books of London, that the only *Tiger* connected with the Mediterranean, or the Levant, made its last appearance in London port in March, 1588.⁷

(The cryptic allusions to Puntarvolo's projected voyage to visit the Grand Turk in Constantinople, in Jonson's *Every Man Out*, occurring as they do a short time after Sordido's project of hanging himself on the expectation of plenty, evidently apply here in some way which we have not yet been able to fathom.)

The *Macbeth* of history, King of Scotland, 1040-57, killed Duncan in combat and was himself killed by Duncan's son, Malcolm III. This Duncan I had come to the throne through wholesale slaughter of the reigning branch, perpetrated by Malcolm II; but one woman of the family, Gruoch, had survived, who subsequently had a son by her first husband and afterward married Macbeth. (This explains Lady Macbeth's having had experience of motherhood, while her husband was childless.) Holinshed's account of Macbeth says, "special lie his wife lay sore upon him to attempt the thing, as that she was verie ambitious, burning in unquenchable desire to beare the name of queene."

This background the author took from Holinshed's chronicle, along with something of the witches' prophecy to Macbeth and Banquo, of which he says:

Afterwards the common opinion was that these women were either the weird sisters, that is (as ye would say) the goddesses of destinie, or else some nymphes or furies indued with knowledge of prophesie . . . because everie thing came to pass as they had spoken.⁸

It is the story of the murder of Duff by Donwald to which the dramatist more closely adheres; for this was a sin against hospitality. Holinshed relates it as follows:

Then Donwald, though he abhorred the act greatly in his heart, yet through the instigation of his wife he called four of his servants unto him. . . . They entered the chamber (in which the king lay) a little before cock-crow where they secretly cut his throat as he lay sleeping . . . and immediately by a postern-gate carried forth the dead body into the fields. . . . *Donwald (then) slew the chamberlains as guilty of the heinous murder.*

⁶ *McCre: Life of Sir Martin Frobisher*, p. 239.

⁷ *The Problem of Hamlet*, p. 175.

⁸ Cf. Lanham's speech (*M. of V.*, II.2.60-3).

Lady Macbeth calls Duncan's men "his two chamberlains." (1.7.63.)
And Macbeth kills them:

O! yet I do repent me of my fury,
That I did kill them. (II.3.107-8.)

From the manuscript *Buik of the Cronicles of Scotland*, in the possession of the Earl and Countess of Lennox, Lord Oxford paraphrased some of the dialogue between Donwald and his wife for his leading characters. So also did he draw upon the *Buik* for Lady Macbeth's behavior after the crime had been committed, for in Holinshed it is Donwald himself who suffers; but for this he had other sources as well. There are further recognizable parallels with the *Buik*, including the prophecy to Banquo and a characterization of Macbeth, which must be omitted here, for the sake of economy.

So much for the chronicles.

As for *Macbeth's* connection with contemporary French history, a full discussion would require too extensive a recapitulation of events. We shall, therefore, retail only a few of the salient correspondences, besides that of the murder of the Duke of Guise at Henry III's Chateau at Blois, where he had arrived upon the invitation of the King, as we have said, the indomitable Catherine being present at the time.

The apparition of the Eight Kings (IV.1) is matched by a macabre "vision of the future Kings of France" which Catherine had experienced, as it is related by Nicholas Pasquier:

Rugieri told the Queen-Mother to gaze steadily into a large mirror which hung on the wall, (where) she would see the future Kings of France appear in succession and that each of them would reign as many years as his apparition in the mirror would make complete turns. With trepidation she did as directed. First there appeared a pale and sickly youth whom she recognized as her son Francis II, who slowly made one turn and faded from her view. Next came her son Charles, who, as Catharine breathlessly watched, made thirteen turns and passed out of sight. He was followed by her son Henry, who . . . made fifteen turns and . . . vanished. Then entered upon the scene Henry of Navarre, who, as Catharine . . . watched . . . spellbound, made twenty turns and likewise disappeared. Following him came a bright boy (Louis XIII), who continued turning . . . until, when he had done so thirty times, Catharine in an agony cried out that *she could look no more*, and fainted away.⁹

An arresting recollection obtrudes itself here. In *The Tempest*, where the blue-eyed "hag" was seen to represent Catherine de' Medici, there is a passage which suggests *Macbeth* with its virulent "hags," the witches, and justifies the identification of the French Queen Mother in both plays. Antonio winds up a speech thus:

⁹ E.T.C.: *Hidd. All.*; pp. 588-9.

. . . The occasion speaks thee; and
My strong imagination sees a crown
Dropping upon thy head (*Temp.*: II.1.208-10)

Macbeth uses the same rhythm; it occurs in the same act, same scene.

. . . the bell invites me. (II.1.62.)

Catherine saw her vision in a glass; and in *Macbeth*, the last of the Eight Kings has "a glass" in his hand.

Macbeth. Thou art too like the spirit of Banquo; down!
Thy crown does sear mine eyeballs; and thy hair,
Thou other gold-bound brow, is like the first:
A third is like the former. Filthy hags!
Why do you show me this? A fourth! Start, eyes!
What! will the line stretch out to the crack of doom?
Another yet? A seventh! *I'll see no more*;
And yet the eighth appears, who bears a glass
Which shows me many more; and some I see
That two-fold balls and treble sceptres carry. . . (IV.1.111 *et seq.*)

A further connection with the contemporary French scene is that in November 1589, Lord Oxford's brother-in-law, Lord Willoughby, was in command of the English auxiliary troops serving with Henry IV, of Navarre, when he made his first attack on Paris. Moreover, in 1588, in England, interest in witches had become heightened. Bishop Jewell had exhorted Elizabeth from the pulpit to take strong measures against them; and in one small town alone, St. Osees in Essex (Oxford's own county), seventy or eighty witches were burned. No doubt the Earl still felt, as he had in the case of Mary Stuart:

It is a heretic that makes the fire,
Not she which burns in 't.

The witches' repetition of "nine" and "thrice to make up nine" (I.3) has reference to the nine different occasions upon which the Duke of Guise had been warned that Henry III meant to murder him. On the night of the assassination, the weather was stormy, the wind howling, and the rain pouring, just as Lennox describes it when Duncan was murdered (II.3.54 *et seq.*):

The night has been unruly: where we lay
Our chimneys were blown down. . . .

And yet Macbeth and his wife have stressed the silence of the night:

Macbeth. . . . Now o'er the one-half world
Nature seems dead. . . . (II.1.49-50);

and,

I have done the deed. Didst thou not hear a noise?
Lady Macbeth. I heard the owl scream and the crickets cry.
Did not you speak?

Macbeth. When?
Lady Macbeth. Now.
Macbeth. As I descended?
Lady Macbeth. Ay.
Macbeth. Hark! (II.2.15-20.)

This inconsistency does not greatly concern the dramatist—any more, in fact, than the time-sequence does, or the childless Macbeth's concern about the succession—for, in the lofty manner of Greek drama, he is describing the black horror of murder provoked by ambition and its effect upon the murderer himself: he is not portraying one specific crime, although, so expert is his artistry, it can be taken so, and, indeed, has been for many, many years.

Another French topical allusion is Henry III's fondness for dogs, which he kept constantly about him. This gives occasion for Macbeth's catalogue (III.1.93 *et seq.*):

As hounds, and greyhounds, mongrels, spaniels, curs,
 Sloughs, water-rugs, and demi-wolves. . . .

As Henry plotted with hired assassins to murder Guise, Macbeth's reference to dogs while instructing the "two Murderers" sharpens the identification, as it was, of course, intended to do. Many passages in *Macbeth* derive unmistakably from Oxford's early play, *Ardon of Feversham*, which was a revision of a still earlier one called *Murderous Michael*. In this former murder-play, as in *Macbeth*, guests arrive and appearances have to be guarded. Alice—quainly spelled Ales—tries, like the sleep-walking Lady Macbeth, to get rid of the blood—in this case staining the floor:

Ales. But with my nails Ile scrape away the blood:—
 The more I strive the more the bloode appears.¹⁰

Another passage reads:

Black night hath hid the pleasures of ye day,
 And sheeting darkness overhangs the earth,
 And with the black folde of her cloudy robe
 Obscures us from the eyesight of the world:
 The loysie minutes linger on their time,
 Loth to give due audit to the howre.

With the contemporary French circumstances Lord Oxford mingled certain details of seventeen years before which had added special horror to the grisly brutality of St. Bartholomew's Day. Lillian Win-

¹⁰ In the *Agamemnon* of Aeschylus, Cassandra describes the House of Atreus as cursed of God—

The blood-stained hands of them that smite their kin—
 The strangling noose, and, spattered o'er
 With human blood, the reeking floor.

There are many correspondences between *Macbeth* and the plays of the *Oresteia*.

stanley assumes that all the French allusions stem from this period. Of these, too, we shall speak only briefly.

In 1572, Charles IX, son of Catherine de' Medici, was King of France, and the noble Admiral Coligny was leader of the Huguenots. The Queen Mother had become increasingly jealous of his power, as well as concerned about the strength of the Huguenots.

De Thou relates the situation on the eve of the massacre as follows:

The Queen went at midnight to the chambers of the King, fearing he would change his resolution, because he seemed to her to waver and the atrocity of the action put him in doubt. . . . [She] blamed him fiercely for losing by delay this magnificent opportunity of exterminating his enemies which God had given him. . . . [Charles] who was very proud and accustomed to shed blood, feeling himself *accused of cowardice*, was angry at her discourse and commanded that the thing should be done.

Lady Macbeth. . . . Was the hope drunk
 Wherein you dress'd yourself? hath it slept since,
 And wakes it now to look so green and pale
 At what it did so freely?

. . . . 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' the adage?
Macbeth. Prhee, peace.
 I dare do all that may become a man;
 Who dares do more is none. (I.7.35-47.)

De Thou continues:

The Queen took advantage of his anger, and, still fearing that he would relent, gave a *signal for the bell* of St. Auxerrois to be sounded.

Miss Winstanley notes how the hesitant Macbeth listens for the signal:¹¹

Macbeth. Go bid thy mistress, when my drink is ready
 She strike upon the bell.

 I go, and it is done; the bell invites me,
 Hear it not, Duncan; for it is a knell
 That summons thee to heaven or to hell. (II.1.31-64.)

The effect is terrific.

Lady Macbeth Hark!
 Peace!
 It was the owl that shriek'd, the fatal bellman. (II.2.3-4.)

¹¹ *Macbeth*, *King Lear*, and *Contemporary History*; p. 117.

And later:

Macduff. Awake! awake!
Ring the alarm-bell. Murder and treason! (II.3.74-5.)

As the bell of St. Germain Auxerrois was the signal for the murder of Coligny and the massacre of the Huguenots, so did the bell serve here for the murder of the noble Duncan. Then, again, Malcolm orders:

... Ring the bell. (*Bell rings*)
Enter Lady Macbeth.

Lady Macbeth. What's the business
That such a hideous trumpet calls to parley
The sleepers of the house? speak, speak! (II.3.81-4.)

The description of Duncan's murder is that of Coligny's:

His silver skin lac'd with his golden blood;
And his *gash'd* stabs look'd like a breach in nature. (II.3.113-14.)

Catherine advised Charles insistently to dissimulate, telling him that a man who could not dissimulate was unworthy to be a king. He called her "Madame la Serpente."

Lady Macbeth chides her thane for having a face like an open book.

... To beguile the time,
Look like the time; bear welcome in your eye,
Your hand, your tongue; look like the innocent flower,
But be the *serpent* under 't. (I.5.63-6.)

As there is a banquet in the play, so was there a feast connected with the massacre. The night set for the terrible deed was that which marked the wedding of Henry of Navarre to Marguerite de Valois. In *The Massacre of Paris*, Nat Lee put it,

A reconciliation, with a wedding Feast
While murder was the Treat of ev'ry Guest.¹²

The helpless Huguenots were murdered by the light of torches; and so was Banquo.

Charles was tormented until his death with sleeplessness, and with all kinds of hallucinations; he died of "a malady which caused blood to exude from every pore of his body."¹³ Laval quotes him as having said, the day before his death, "Ah, Nurse! *How much blood!* How many murders. . . ."

Macbeth. 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 red. (II.2.61-4.)

¹² Op. cit.; p. 120.
¹³ Op. cit.; p. 123.

Again,

It will have blood, they say; *blood will have blood.* (III.4.122.)

And Lady Macbeth:

Yet who would have thought the old man to have had *so much blood*
in him?

Here's the smell of *the blood* still: all the perfumes of Arabia will not
sweeten this little hand. (V.1.41-54.)

There are more parallels, but these must suffice. Those connecting the play with the murder of Darnley are even more numerous.

In stressing our failure to apprehend the symbolic mythology in Shakespeare, caused by our assumption that there was no essential difference between the psychology of the sixteenth and the nineteenth centuries, Lilian Winstanley was repeatedly struck by the fact that his French contemporaries employed the same method constantly. Had she realized that Shakespeare was actually a feudal nobleman and scholar, that he was personally acquainted with and himself influenced (instead of *vice versa*) some of these French writers—many of whom visited the English court: du Bartas, D'Aubigné, Mathieu, and others—and could converse with them in their own language, as well as read their works in the original, perhaps she would have been less startled to find that his method was so similar to theirs. But that she did discover this is to her eternal credit. She has made penetrating and scholarly analyses of Shakespeare's greatest tragedies, even though she dates them too late. It is to be hoped that her work will one day receive the appreciation it deserves. We rely, perforce, upon her research in the matter of some of the French and all of the Scottish documents quoted here.

It must not be forgotten that the times in which the Earl of Oxford was born and spent his life were violent. Not only had two of his ancestors been beheaded, his cousin and close friend, the Duke of Norfolk, went to the block when Oxford was twenty-two, and so did others whom he knew well. At one time during his youth there had been three hundred heads on pikes along London Bridge. With Elizabeth it was a commonplace to threaten to have a man's head. The execution of Mary Stuart had occurred less than two years before the writing of *Macbeth*, and it was to be only twelve years before Elizabeth ordered the execution of Essex, with whom she, and certainly Oxford too, had had an intimate acquaintance. As for Darnley, he was the Queen's cousin, and he had been only four years older than Oxford; they would have known each other during boyhood. However he may have felt about this "long lad" in the early days, Oxford came to have a special sympathy for his tragic fate, as we shall

eventually show. Under the guise of telling "old tales," Elizabeth's premier Earl was always giving "brief chronicles" of his own time. It was, of course, helpful to him to have access to state papers, to Cecil's correspondence with his spies and with diplomats, and to letters from Scottish nobles to the English court.

After the murder of Rizzio in 1566, Mary's hatred of Darnley had become acute, while her passion for Bothwell increased to the point of obsession. He had an insensate ambition, and she longed to gratify it. In one of her sonnets she wrote:

Pour lay ie veux rechercher la grandeur. . . .

Buchanan in his *Detection of Mary Stuart* said: "Bothwell provided all things that were needful to accomplish the heinous act." And Melville related how "The King was afterwards brought and lodged in Kirk of Field as a place of *good air* where he might recover his health"; while the *Oration* appended to the *Detection* exclaimed: "O good God! Going about to murder her husband, seeketh she for a *wholesome air*?"

Arriving at Dunsinane (I.6) Duncan says:

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

Banquo. This guest of summer,
The temple-haunting martlet, does approve
By his lov'd mansionry that the heaven's breath
Smells woonly here: . . .

Where they most breed and haunt, I have observ'd
The air is delicate.

What terribly irony is here; for the House of Lorraine, to which Mary Stuart belonged on her mother's side, had a "martlet" as its badge.

The Scottish records stress the fact that the murder was done "under silence of night." "The phrase," says Miss Winstanley, "is repeated like a refrain in nearly all the proclamations." The Register of the Privy Council of Scotland puts it thus:

The horrible and unworthy murder of our king, our sovereign's late father, committed *under silence of night* within his own lodging by James, Earl of Bothwell.¹⁴

We are made to feel the breathless and foreboding silence which surrounds the actual murder:

Lady Macbeth. Hark! Pease!
It was the owl that shriek'd . . .

¹⁴ Op. cit.; p. 68.

and

Macbeth . . . Didst thou not hear a noise?
Lady Macbeth. I heard the owl scream and the crickets cry.
Did not you speak?
Macbeth. When?
Lady Macbeth. Now.
Macbeth. Hark! (II.2.3-20.)

The almost unbearable clamor of the knocking on the door, in the play, is matched twice in the actual event, first by Bothwell's knocking on the gate of Kirk o' Field, so loud that it roused the people, and again by the knocking of the messenger on Bothwell's door to inform him of the disaster.

"Hepburn's deposition" brought out the fact that Bothwell, "on coming in, immediately called for a *drink*, and *taking off his clothes*, went to bed . . . for about half an hour, when a messenger *came to the gate, knocking*, and was admitted. 'Fiel treason!' Bothwell cried, when informed that 'the King is slain.'"¹⁵
Macbeth has spoken of his "drink" (II.1.31); and Lady Macbeth says (II.2.71-2):

*Get on your nightgown, lest occasion call us,
And show us to be watchers.*

The knocking continues within. And Macbeth cries:

Wake Duncan with thy knocking! I would thou couldst.

It had made a fearful impression upon Lady Macbeth. She speaks of it afterwards when walking in her sleep:

To bed, to bed: there's *knocking* at the gate. (V.1.68-9)

The whole scene haunts her:

Wash your hands, put on your *nightgown*; look not so pale. (64-5.)

Nelson's deposition said that he "lay with Edward Symons in the little gallery, that went direct to the South out of the King's chamber." Two servants were killed with Darnley, and two survived to give evidence.

Macbeth. Hark!
Who lies i' the second chamber?
Lady Macbeth. Donalbain.

Macbeth. There's one did laugh in 's sleep, and one cried 'Murder!' That they did wake each other: I stood and heard them.

Lady Macbeth. *There are two lodg'd together.* (II.2.20-6.)

¹⁵ Op. cit.; p. 72.

Pitcairn records that on March 25, 1567, the prisoners were accused of the

shameful, treasonable, and abominable slaughter of the late King's grace . . . *when lying in his bed, taking his night's rest* . . . also for the cruel slaughter and murder of the late William Taylor, his grace's servant, and the late Andrew Macraig treasonably . . . *under silence of the night*.¹⁶

Presently Lady Macbeth calms her husband with:

A little water *cleans us* of this deed;
How easy is it then! (II.2.68-9.)

And in the Calendar of Scottish State Papers it is recorded that

James Earl of Bothwell has set up a writing subscribed with his hand that he was *cleansed* of the king's murder.¹⁷

Again, we find the Laird of Ormiston confessing that Bothwell had said to him, "None dare find fault with it when it shall be done"; and Lady Macbeth says, while walking in her sleep:

What need we fear who knows it, when *none can call our power to account*? (V.1.39-41.)

In *Mary Queen of Scotland and the Isles*, Stelian Zweig draws a forceful parallel between the actual Scottish tragedy and that which Shakespeare created through the magic of his art. We quote one passage:

Ambition supplies her with abundant energy until the deed. Lady Macbeth is crafty, shrewd, and resolute while the crime is still only willed, purposed, and planned, while the hot, red blood has not yet flowed over her hands and over her soul. With cajoling words like those used by Mary to lure Darnley to Kirk o' Field, she lures Duncan into the bedchamber. . . . But immediately after the crime she becomes a different woman. . . . Conscience burns within her like a furnace. Delirious, with rigid gaze, she wanders through the rooms of the castle, a horror to her friends and . . . to herself. Her brain is overwhelmed by one desire, the longing to forget, the morbid yearning for surcease from thought, the craving for death. So it was likewise with Mary Stuart after Darnley's murder. She had been completely transformed, not only in mind, but in aspect as well, so that Drury, one of Elizabeth's spies, reported to his royal mistress that never, without a severe illness, had a woman changed in outward appearance in so brief a time so remarkably. . . .

. . . Perhaps, like Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, she continued to hope that the world would be silent if she herself were silent. . . . But when questioning voices became urgent; when, at night, from the streets of Edinburgh, the names of the murderers were shouted up at her window;

when *Lennox*, her slain husband's father, and Elizabeth, her enemy, and *Seton*, her friend, made common cause with the rest of the world in insisting that the criminals be called to account, she lost her head. As if in a trance, she listened . . . defenseless, impotent, and despairing.¹⁸

We have spoken of the prominence of *Lennox* in the play. It will be noted that it is *Seton*, Mary Stuart's friend, who informs Macbeth of Lady Macbeth's death:

Macbeth. Wherefore was that cry?
Seton. The queen, my lord, is dead. (V.5.15-16.)

De Croc reported that "Alone with Bothwell, Mary was heard to call for a knife to slay herself." The Spanish State Papers also record this, as having occurred "only two days after the wedding." And de Silva commented that "an evil conscience can know no peace." ¹⁹ The doctor seems to fear suicide for Lady Macbeth.

God, God forgive us all! Look after her;
Remove from her the means of all annoyance,
And still keep eyes upon her. (V.1.78-80.) ²⁰

Buchanan said that Bothwell's servants were "robbers, pirates, and thieves." Macbeth employed the two murderers. We have noted that, although Darnley's father, *Lennox*, was the foremost accuser, he was obliged to observe the greatest caution, for, as the State Papers of July 21, 1567, put it,

No counsellors of the realm had liberty of free speech or surety of their own life if they should in council resist the inordinate affections of that *bloody tyrant*.

Macduff exclaims:

. . . O nation miserable,
With an untitled *tyrant bloody-scepter'd*. (IV.3.103-4.)

The Calendar of Scottish State Papers stated: "All Scotland cried out upon the foul murder of the king." There was a widespread feeling that the country had been disgraced and humiliated before all Europe.

¹⁸ P. 211.

¹⁹ Winstanley: op. cit.; p. 87.

²⁰ In *The Chorophori, or Libation-Bearers*, (l. 525), the Leader tells that it was "the night-wandering terror of a dream" which caused Clytemnestra to send offerings to Agamemnon's tomb. "Then out of sleep she started with a cry." (l. 534.) Although he does not mention Lady Macbeth in connection with Clytemnestra, Oates describes the latter as follows (Intro. to *Agamemnon*; p. 164):

"With sure hand, he [Aeschylus] reveals . . . her adamantine calm as she first greets her husband, her wild triumph after the murder, when she glories in her deed, and her final exhausted reaction at the close of the play."

¹⁶ Op. cit.; p. 66; quot. *Ancient Scottish Criminal Trials*.

¹⁷ Op. cit.; p. 78.

Macbeth. And pity, like a naked, new-born babe,
Striding the blast, or heaven's cherubin, hors'd
Upon the sightless couriers of the air,
Shall blow the horrid deed in every eye,
That tears shall drown the wind. (I.7.21-5.)

Lord Oxford drew freely upon the Scottish witch-trials for his imprecations and strange witch-talk. Much of this must have been added in 1591, when the famous witch-trials of Scotland took place. We cannot go into detail here further than to say that such things as the names, Grimalkin and Paddock (I.1.8-9), sailing in a sieve (I.3.8), and controlling the weather (I.3.11-25), are thus derived; but the correspondence between the behavior of the witches in the play throughout to those who had been active in Scotland is striking. However, the English witches, no doubt, used similar tricks and a similar jargon.

Miss Winstanley describes the contemporary plan showing the stages of the Darnley murder which is preserved in the Record Office in London, as follows:

In one . . . the bodies of the king and his servant are shown, and above them, represented, as if *floating in the air*, is a *dagger*. . . . A second is a *barred portal*. . . . A third compartment contains a picture of a child, with the inscription, "Judge and avenge my cause, O Lord!" a *broken branch* lying by the dead bodies. This [she adds] corresponds very closely to . . . *Macbeth* (IV.1.86-9):

. . . What is this,
That rises like the issue of a king,
And wears upon his baby brow the round
And top of sovereignty?

The floating dagger is, of course, what *Macbeth* saw:

Is this a dagger which I see before me,
The handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch thee:
I have thee not, and yet I see thee still. . . . (II.1.33 *et seq.*)

The "barred portal" suggests the terrible knocking. And the "broken branch" must have corresponded in the artist's mind with Birnam woods, although it may, as Miss Winstanley suggests, have been meant for the broken branch of Darnley's life.

It would be interesting to know if, in revising this drama after Burghley's death in 1598, Lord Oxford did not have the old Lord Treasurer in mind when he wrote Malcolm's speech (I.4.7-11):

Nothing in his life
Became him like the leaving it; he died
As one that had been studied in his death
To throw away the dearest thing he ow'd
As 'twere a careless trifle.

For Burghley died very peacefully, almost casually. He had, moreover, in his life such a mild and agreeable expression—if one is to judge by his portraits—that Duncan's ensuing words are significant:

There's no art
To find the mind's construction in the face:
He was a gentleman on whom I built
An absolute trust.

This was certainly the Earl of Oxford speaking of Lord Burghley. Although *Macbeth* was clearly a work of Oxford's mature genius, still he would have added to it and revised it again and again, as was his habit with all save a very few of his plays.

It would be gratifying to know if he did not write *Macbeth* to appease the Queen for having given so sympathetic a picture of Mary Stuart in *The Winter's Tale*, implying a concomitant slur upon herself for having ordered such a summary trial of the unfortunate Mary. He was in a state of profound melancholy at this time, and Elizabeth's resentment would have deepened his mood and contributed to the grimness of his fancy, for he was probably just now as near cynicism as he ever came in his life to be.

Whether he had already finished *Venus and Adonis* cannot of course be positively said—we believe he had: much of it is in his youthful style—but there is strong evidence that the dramatic poem, *Lucretia*, also in part an early work, was even now being revised, or had recently been, when he wrote this poetic drama pervaded with the silence of night and the dark stealthy deeds of men. The two works have much in common, far more than appears on the surface from such phrases as,

Stars, hide your fires!
Let not light see my black and deep desires. (*Mac.*: I.4.50-1.)

. . . the wolf,
. . . thus with his stealthy pace,
With Tarquin's ravishing strides, toward his design
Moves like a ghost. (II.1.53-6.)

The parallels are numerous. *Stanzas* 74 and 96 of *Lucretia* are especially to be noted for similarity in the action itself.

The dramatist showed he knew the troubles that beset a monarch when he had *Macbeth* say of Duncan (III.2.23-6):

After life's fullful fever he sleeps well;
Treason has done his worst; nor steel nor poison,
Malice domestic, foreign levy, nothing,
Can touch him further.

He had seen Elizabeth threatened with all of these. And he had seen his own father buried at Earl's Colne, as Macduff says Duncan has been

Carried to Colmekill;
The sacred storehouse of his predecessors
And guardian of their bones. (II.4.33-5.)

He had plumbed the deepest reaches of pessimistic skepticism when he wrote "Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow" (V.5.19-28) and was undoubtedly expressing his own melancholy sentiments in the passage,

I have liv'd long enough: my Mev of life
Is fall'n into the sear, the yellow leaf;
And that which should accompany old age,
As honour, love, obedience, troops of friends,
I must not look to have; but, in their stead,
Curses, not loud but deep, mouth-honour, breath,
Which the poor heart would fain deny, and dare not. (V.3.22-8.)

Nietzsche might have been speaking of the Earl of Oxford and the state in which he found himself, when he wrote in *Beyond Good and Evil* (29):

It is the business of the very few to be independent; it is a privilege of the strong. And whoever attempts it, even with the best right, but without being obliged to do so, proves that he is not only strong, but also daring beyond measure. He enters into a labyrinth, he multiplies a thousandfold the dangers which life itself already brings with it; not the least of which is that no man can see how and where he loses his way, becomes isolated, and is torn piecemeal by some minotaur of conscience. Supposing such a one comes to grief, it is so far from the comprehension of men that they neither feel it, nor sympathize with it. And he cannot any longer go back! He cannot even go back again to the sympathy of men!

In 1589, Lord Oxford was in his fortieth year, not young for an Elizabethan; and he was presently addressing the Fair Youth from the standpoint of one whose "May of youth" was long past, with the words:

When forty winters shall besiege thy brow,
And dig deep trenches in thy beauty's field. . . . (Son. 2.)

By 1589, the Fair Youth was predominant in his interest and in his concern. He gives evidence of this fact in *Macbeth*, in a scene which brings his own personal involvement, or self-dramatization, in the play, to its crux. But we must defer discussion of this point until we have presented certain preliminary circumstances.

In spite of the conjectures of orthodox scholars that various passages in *Macbeth* were written to flatter King James, 1606-10, there

is no record that this drama was ever performed before him. That is surely not surprising, since one of the most vivid frames of reference is that of James's father's murder by his mother's paramour.

Moreover, it was not the Gunpowder Plot which concerned the author of this masterpiece. He was brooding about the sin of ambition and reflecting that the wages of sin is death.