An Analysis of Macbeth According to Scholastic Aesthetics

William George Topmoeller
Loyola University Chicago

Follow this and additional works at: https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_theses

Part of the Literature in English, British Isles Commons

Recommended Citation
Topmoeller, William George, "An Analysis of Macbeth According to Scholastic Aesthetics" (1949).
Master’s Theses. 703.
https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_theses/703

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses and Dissertations at Loyola eCommons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Master’s Theses by an authorized administrator of Loyola eCommons. For more information, please contact ecommons@luc.edu.

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 License.
Copyright © 1949 William George Topmoeller
AN ANALYSIS

OF

MACBETH

ACCORDING TO

SCHOLASTIC AESTHETICS

BY

WILLIAM G. TOPMOELLER, S.J., A.B.

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF

THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER

OF ARTS IN LOYOLA UNIVERSITY

JANUARY 1949
VITA AUCTORIS

William George Topmoeller, S.J., son of Dr. William J. and Margo Voss Topmoeller, was born in Cincinnati, Ohio, March 29, 1921.

After his elementary education at the Ursuline Academy, Cincinnati, he attended St. Xavier's High School, Cincinnati, graduating therefrom in June, 1939.

In September of the same year he entered the Society of Jesus at Milford Novitiate, Milford, Ohio, and enrolled in Xavier University, Cincinnati, Ohio.

In August, 1943, he transferred to West Baden College, West Baden, Indiana, for his three year course in Philosophy, at which time he was academically connected with Loyola University, Chicago, Illinois. In June, 1944, he received the degree of Bachelor of Arts.

At this time he registered as a graduate student in the Department of English at Loyola University.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Professor Norman Foerster---Need of Application of Thomistic aesthetics to works of art---Aim of thesis---Division of Chapters---Aquinas as an art critic.</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. THE CANON OF IMITATION</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Thomistic definition of art---God, All Beautiful---Creation, a participation of God's beauty---Nature's construction of act and potency---Idealization---Artistic abstraction---Artistic creation---Thomas and Cajetan on the function of art in regard to Nature.</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. THE CANON OF SPLendor OF FORM, OR CLARITY</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Matter and form---Thomistic qualities of beauty: Integrity, Due Proportion, Clarity---Form and essence---Substantial and accidental forms---Universal and individual---Sense perception and imagination---Idealized form---Application of imitation and splendor of form to Macbeth in a general view---Dramatic art's peculiar imitation---Act and potency in Macbeth---the human soul, the form of man---Actions and passions, the accidental forms---Theme of Macbeth: the ruling passion of ambition---Ambition and God's creation, artistic abstraction and creation.</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. THE CANON OF DUE PROPORTION</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aestheticians of all ages require harmony in art---Unity amid variety---Thomistic texts on proportion---Teleological nature of proportion---Explanation of &quot;due&quot;---Types of proportion---Structural proportion: Measure, emphasis, restraint, balance, contrast---Formal proportion---Relation of parts to the whole: naturalness of actions and passions in respect to human nature, to personality of characters---Relation of parts among themselves: development of character, events of plot, settings.</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER</td>
<td>PAGE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. THE CANON OF INTEGRITY</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrity and perfection—Ens and Unum—Completeness, unity, fullness—Divisions of Integrity—Completeness in Dramatic art: beginning, middle and end; sufficient causes in rising action for climax; total effects of climax in falling action—Introduction, rising action, climax, falling action, catastrophe, conclusion—Dramatic conflict—Unity in dramatic art: teleological direction of every detail toward catastrophe—Fullness in dramatic art: magnitude of character and plot; richness of setting—Summary of aesthetic principles.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. APPLICATION OF THE FOUR CANONS TO THE INTRODUCTION OF MACBETH</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII. APPLICATION OF THE FOUR CANONS TO THE RISING ACTION OF MACBETH</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Success in suppression of rebellion of Cawdor—Macbeth receives acclaim and honor—Duncan's weaknesses—Diabolic temptation through the Weird Sisters—Macbeth appointed new Thane of Cawdor—Duncan unjustly names Malcolm his successor—Nature and function of Lady Macbeth—Worldliness—Conflict of Macbeth's conscience—His passionate determination to sin, to kill Duncan.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII. APPLICATION OF THE FOUR CANONS TO THE CLIMAX, FALLING ACTION, CATASTROPHE, AND CONCLUSION OF MACBETH</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting of the murder—Apparition of dagger and passionate frenzy of Macbeth—Mental torment during the sin—Immediate remorse of conscience—Removal of the daggers and murder of the grooms—Lady Macbeth faints—Suspicion of the lords—</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Macbeth and Saint Edward of England---De Quincey's essay "On the Knocking at the Gate in Macbeth"---Summary of Macbeth's decline---Murder of Banquo---Escape of Fleance---Banquo's Ghost---Suspicion of lords, who repair to England to arm against Macbeth---Macbeth sinks in sin---He seeks witches---Murder of Macduff's wife and child---Ruin of the realm---Disillusionment in the crown---Isolation and dishonor---Suicide of Lady Macbeth---Macbeth's weariness of life and cynicism---Revelation of the duplicity of Satan's assurances---Loss of courage---Passionate duel---Death---Pity and fear in this tragedy---Macbeth's error of judgment---Idyllic conclusion.

BIBLIOGRAPHY
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

The stimulus for this thesis has come indirectly from the excellent critic and professor of English literature at the University of Iowa, Dr. Norman Foerster. This prominent figure in American literary circles has voiced a just critique of scholastic literary criticism and critics. He charges that scholastic critics continually remain aloof in the realm of abstract, philosophical principle, and never descend to the level of verifying their theories in accepted works of art.

Whether all scholastics come under that indictment is debatable; but, in comparison with non-scholastic critics whose books are rich in exemplifications of principle and analysis of poems, paintings, etc., scholastic philosophers—precisely because they are more philosophically than critically minded—do seem more satisfied to study the nature of beauty and art as "making," than to prove their philosophy of art applicable to works of art. Such fine philosophers as Emmanuel Chapman, Gerald Phelan, Jacques Maritain, S.H. Butcher, and others have explained and developed Aristotle's and Thomas' principles; but to the world of literary critics they have not proven that these principles are the true explanations of art, that they are workable canons of criticism, because they have not sufficiently
applied them to particular works of art.

Moreover, if Thomism is the true theory of reality it must be able to explain those magnificent realities, the masterpieces of the fine arts, according to its fundamental tenet of hylo-morphism, which explains the metaphysical structure of all beings as a union of matter and form.

This thesis takes one work in one field of art; from dramatic art it selects Macbeth, and it will make a critical study of the play according to scholastic canons formulated by Aristotle and St. Thomas Aquinas: imitation, splendor of form, due proportion, and integrity. Chapter II will explain the Canon of Imitation. Chapter III will take up the Canon of Splendor of Form and will apply the Canons of Imitation and Splendor of Form to the play Macbeth considered as a whole. Chapter IV will be concerned with the Canon of Due Proportion and its application to dramatic art. Chapter V will treat of the Canon of Integrity and its application to drama. In the remaining three chapters the play Macbeth will be analyzed scene by scene by a detailed application of the four scholastic canons of aesthetics.

Before beginning the thesis one fact must be mentioned: St. Thomas was a master of theology and philosophy, not literary criticism. Aristotle may have formulated his principles from
the performances of tragedy he witnessed in ancient Greece.
But Thomas never discusses fine art as such; he writes only on
the intellectual virtue of Making, or on the transcendental
quality of all reality - Beauty, or on the Comeliness of Our
Lord Jesus Christ. Yet, a work of art is a creation of beauty.
Hence, from his metaphysical texts can be formulated Thomistic
aesthetics, the Thomistic literary criticism. Jacques Maritain
advises this procedure when he counsels:

...recourse must be had to the metaphysics of
the ancients to discover what they thought
about Beauty, and a progress thence be made
to Art to see what happens when the two terms
meet.¹

From such an analysis of beauty and art one can deduce a
set of artistic and literary principles which this thesis will
apply to *Macbeth*

¹ Jacques Maritain, *Art and Scholasticism*, transl. E.deP.
CHAPTER II
THE CANON OF IMITATION

With characteristic simplicity and brevity both Aristotle and St. Thomas Aquinas define art. Aristotle writes, ""Art imitates nature." St. Thomas reiterates and adds his explanation, "Ars imitatur naturam in sua operatione... reducendo de potentia in actum... ad finem intentum - Art in its work imitates nature... by reducing her from potency to act... to the intended end." Fully understood, the concepts contained in this pithy statement contain the Scholastic aesthetics but they require explanation.

What is to be said in their explanation and application to Macbeth must begin with an analysis of artistic imitation or creation. Although the first three steps in the process of artistic imitation concern mainly the metaphysician and major logician, while only the fourth the art critic, still a brief explanation of the philosophical background is necessary.

In the beginning there was God, all-perfect, all-beautiful. And God in His goodness deigned to share His perfections and

beauty, in greater or lesser degree, with creatures, whom He would call into being. All the perfection, all the beauty these creatures would enjoy would be but participations in the divine beauty. Aquinas writes:

Pulchritudo creaturae nihil aliud est quam similitudo divinae pulchritudinis in rebus participata.

The beauty of creatures is nothing else than a reflection of the Divine Beauty participated in by those creatures.³

God thus made all things, and since art is making,⁴ He may rightly be called the divine Artist. No one makes anything without first conceiving in his mind an exemplary image of his intended project.⁵ Hence, in the divine mind there are

³ Aquinas, Commentaria in Librum Dionysii De Divinis Nominibus, Opera Omnia, Tipis Petri Piaccadori, Parmae, 1588, VII, IV., lect. 5. My own translation, as will be all translations not otherwise marked.
⁵ Ibid., I., q. 47, a. 3, Opera Omnia, I, 460. "For the production of anything an exemplar is necessary... For an artificer produces a determinate form in matter by reason of the exemplar before him, whether it is the exemplar beheld externally, or the exemplar interiorly conceived in the mind." Transl. Ibid. II, 218.
original ideas of every object in creation. We can call these the divine archetypes or ideal images.

When God created He embodied these ideals in individual material things. Because matter is the principle of individuation, once the ideal was wedded to matter it found itself limited and particularized; hence, it was no longer perfect and complete as in the mind of God, but imperfect and incomplete. The poet Francis Thompson viewed creation in this light when he wrote:

The Supreme Spirit, creating, reveals His conceptions to man in the material forms of Nature... An ideal wakes in the Omnipotent Painter: and straightway over the eternal dikes rush forth the flooding tides of night, the blue of heaven ripples into stars; Nature from Alp to Alpine flower rises lovely with the betrayal of the Divine thought. An ideal wakes in the Omnipotent Poet: and there chimes the rhythm of an ordered universe. An ideal wakes in the Omnipotent Musician: and creation vibrates with the harmony, from the palpitating throat of the bird to the surges of His thunder as they burst in fire along the roaring strand of Heaven... But the divine embodiment is transcendentally inferior to the Divine Ideal... For the ideal, as it is embodied in concrete forms, in nature, in

---

6 Ibid., "In the divine wisdom are the types of all things, which types we have called ideas, i.e. exemplar forms existing in the divine mind." Transl. Ibid.

7 These ideal images are quite similar to Platonic Ideas except (a vital distinction, however) they are in the intentional order, not the ontological.
character, in historic incident, is set against a foil of imperfection. 8

Because this ideal is limited in matter, scholastics say that the individual material object is not pure act, but imperfect act, a composite of act and potency. This basic structure in all nature of act and potency is precisely what Aristotle and Thomas mean by the term nature in their definitions of art. Act is the amount of the ideal present in the concrete individual thing; potency is the capacity of a being to acquire the remaining degree of perfection it now lacks from its full perfection.

Because each created object is incomplete and has this potential constituent in its nature, it is capable of obtaining more and more of the remaining degrees of perfection it does not yet possess. Objects are said, therefore, to tend to their completion or perfection, to the possession of the full act, the full perfection of which they have but a part. It is this metaphysical tendency and transit of nature from potency to act which Aristotle and Thomas maintain art imitates.

How do the artist and his art imitate this fundamental function of nature? The artist - every man for that matter, for

what follows is merely a description of the process of human cognition - looks at an object, experiences a situation, and immediately generalizes. He jumps from this individual thing and sees the relations and similarities between all things. He is drawing out, abstracting, the universal ideal, although he sees it not as vividly and completely as God "saw" it. The artist can do this because the ideal is no longer burdened with matter once it is in the spiritual realm of his intellect.

Every man possesses this power of abstraction and employs it every minute of the day. Why more of us do not use this insight to perceive the significance and beauty in things is probably best explained by Professor Daniels:

The poet sees and records what too many of us miss because, most of the time, we are probably less than half awake to what is going on around us. 'Eyes have they and they see not; ears, and they hear not.' - that is why most of us do not write poetry. Degree of difference in seeing and hearing, in using to their capacity all the senses, trained by practice and experience, - degree of difference in minds and hearts brought to bear on the raw material of experience - this is one of the essential distinctions between the great poet and the writer of what is only 'popular verse.'

This is, of course, only modern wording of the Scholastic axiom: "Quidquid recipitur per modum recipientis recipitur -

Whatever is received is received according to the capacity of the recipient.\textsuperscript{10} A child and an adult notice the same event; but they interpret it with diverse degrees of wisdom. The poet and the peasant behold the same scene or situation; but one sees only the event, the other a law of life.

The artist pierces through this "foil of imperfection," matter, and sees the ideal.\textsuperscript{11} This is part of his genius; this is why he has been revered down the ages as a "seer." But this is only the first half of his genius; for the artist must now proceed to create his work of art, that work of art which will be a message, a communication to the intellects and emotions of his fellow men of the ideal he has envisaged and appreciated. The artist is said to create his work of art, for that is exactly what he does. As God created the natural tree, sunset, lover, moment of parting, so the artist creates the fictional tree, sunset, lover, moment of parting; and the fictional creation is a representation, an imitation, of the natural one.

\textsuperscript{10} Based on Aquinas, S.T., I.I., q. 75, a. 5, ad 4um; G.G., I, c. 43, and other loci.

\textsuperscript{11} A humorous anecdote illustrates this power of the artist to glimpse the ideal and reproduce it again in matter for his audience. A Kentucky mountaineer was noted for the perfection with which he carved animals out of blocks of wood. A lady tourist, watching him whittling a bear, queried, "How can you make it so perfectly?" The drawling reply came back, "Waal, Ma'am, I just takes a block o' wood and stares and stares at it 'til I sees the baar in thar, and then I whittles around it!"
The artist's product is a copy of God's work of art; but note well that it is not a copy merely of the physical object of nature; nothing so superficial and external is the cornerstone of Thomistic aesthetics. Rather it is an imitation of the metaphysical activity of nature; it is an imitation and a completion of that tendency from potency to act in every object. When God gives birth to His ideal, the offspring is a particularized limitation of the ideal wrapped in matter; whereas the product of the artist's labor is such that the ideal is not at all hindered and made imperfect and obscure by its union with matter. Rather the ideal becomes perfect and capable of strongly impressing beholders with its perfection and universality. The ideal in the created object of nature is imperfect and obscure; in the artist's it is perfect and radiant. How is this?

The subjective reason is that the artist's full product is not in the physical material order (as in nature), is not in the arrangement of colors, lines, blocks, sounds or words; but it is in the intentional order, in the minds and emotions of his audience, for in such spiritual faculties universal ideas reside.

The objective and major reason for this is that the artist has not imitated the apparent static state of the physical object of nature, but has imitated its metaphysical dynamic tendency toward the perfect ideal; and in his art-work the
artist has finished this tendency, has brought the object to its natural destiny and goal, to its perfection, to the radiance of its reality. The art-work shows the ideal not as limited, but as perfect and universal. This is why the ideal, the beauty of the thing, stands out, or shines out, or strikes us in the work of art; but does not always strike us when emanating from the object in its natural state. Interpreting Aristotle, S. H. Butcher describes this power of art to achieve the ideal:

The general movement of organic life is part of a progress to the better... Nature, often baffled in her intentions, yet tends towards the desirable end... The artist in his mimic world carries forward this movement to a more perfect completion. The creatures of his art are framed on those ideal lines that nature has drawn.12

By means of the rational faculty of art,... man is able to fulfill [nature's] uncompleted purposes. Where from any cause nature fails, art steps in.13

Fine art eliminates what is transient and particular and reveals the permanent and essential features of the original. It discovers the 'form' towards which an object tends, the result which nature rarely or never can attain. Beneath the individual it tends to find the universal form of reality disengaged from accident, and freed from conditions which thwart its development. The real and the ideal from this point of view are not opposites, as they

13 Ibid., 118.
are sometimes conceived to be. The ideal is the real, but rid of contradictions, unfolding itself according to the laws of its own being, apart from alien influences and disturbances of chance.14

The activity of nature, then, is a constant striving toward perfection, toward the ideal of one's nature, a constant passage from potency to act. Art is an imitation and fulfillment of this constant transition from potency to act; art achieves the ideal where nature fails and exhibits the ideal to the spectator. Art improves upon nature, eliminates the imperfections and demonstrates the perfected, ideal form.

This is exactly the sense in which Aquinas explains his definition of art and provides us with an analogy for clarity. The Angelic Doctor, as was mentioned in the introductory chapter, in speaking of artists includes anyone who makes anything. In the texts that follow he classifies a teacher and a doctor as artists, because one assists the pupil's intellect to its perfection of knowledge and the other helps the patient's body to its perfection of health. Indeed they are pedagogical and medical artists. St. Thomas is replying to the question: Can one man teach another? He reasons as follows:

We must therefore decide the question differently, by saying that the teacher causes knowledge in the learner by reducing

14 Ibid., 150.
him from potentiality to act, as the Philosopher says (Phys. viii, 4). In order to make this clear, we must observe that of effects proceeding from an exterior principle, some proceed from the exterior principle alone; as the form of a house is caused to be in matter by art alone; whereas other effects proceed sometimes from an exterior principle, sometimes from an interior principle: thus health is caused in a sick man, sometimes by an exterior principle, namely by medical art, sometimes by an interior principle, as when a man is healed by the force of nature. In these latter effects two things must be noticed. First, that art in its work imitates nature, for just as nature heals a man by alteration, digestion, rejection of the matter that caused the sickness, so does art. Secondly, we must remark that the exterior principle, art, acts, not as principal agent, but as helping the principal agent, which is the interior principle, by strengthening it, and by furnishing it with instruments and assistance, of which the interior principle makes use in producing the effect. Thus the physician strengthens nature, and employs food and medicine, of which nature makes use for the intended end.15

And Cardinal Cajetan further elucidates:

Regarding the third paragraph of the corpus: First, is given this answer to the question: the teacher causes knowledge in the student by reducing him from potency to first act. This is proven first in Physics viii. Then it is proven, defined, subdivided, and clarified. It is proven thus: an effect which can be produced both by nature and by art is produced by art in the same manner as it is produced by nature; now knowledge is such an effect; therefore it is produced by

the art of the teacher in the same manner as by nature. But it is produced by nature by reducing itself from potency to the act of knowledge. Therefore by the teacher it is produced by reducing someone else from potency to the act of knowledge. The major is proved: because art imitates nature. And for the proof of this there are, first, distinguished two types of effects: one produced entirely by an extrinsic agent, as a house, the other produced both by an extrinsic and an intrinsic agent, as health... Finally there is pointed out the identity in the manner of the causality of both agents, as is made clear by the example of health... The explanation is defined because the teacher is said to be not the principle cause but a servant and assistant of nature; in this way, namely, he helps to reduce (the nature) from potency to act. And to prove this distinction he notes in general the relation between art and nature in regard to those effects which can be produced by both; and he explains that the relation of art is as an assistant to the principle agent, and always the principle agent is the same, namely nature.15

How do these texts answer the "question" put by Thomas, namely, Can one man teach another; and how do they concern fine art? St. Thomas answers that the perfection and goal toward which the intellect tends is knowledge; it is in potency to this end. The artist (here the teacher) helps the natural intellect reduce itself from potency to act, attain more and more perfection, knowledge. The artist does not work from

15 Cajetan, Card. Thomas de Vio, Commentarius in Summa Theologica, Opera Omnia, 559.
outside only, as does a bricklayer on a house; rather he internally helps (coadjuvans) nature perform her natural activity, progress to perfection. Art therefore in performing this its work (sua operatio) imitates nature, for as Cajetan comments: Art works eodem modo quo fieret a natura - the same way as nature. There is an identitas modi agendi - identity of activity.

Aquinas then gives the illustration of medical art. The perfection of the body is health; when ill it is not enjoying this perfection. The doctor steps in with his art and helps the body to cure itself, bring itself to perfection; and in this assistance in the transit from imperfection to perfection, art imitates and completes the basic activity of nature.

This "work" of art has already been adequately demonstrated in the case of fine art. In the tree as we find it in nature, in the human lover, in an activity such as a moment of parting, the ideal is not perfect, not always touchingly beautiful; the fine artist by his art helps it to the beauty of its perfection by eliminating the material notes which obscure the ideal ("expellendo materiam quae causat morbum - rejecting the matter that caused the sickness") and advancing the ideal to the perfection toward which it tends ("reducendo ipsum de potentia in actum...ad finem intentum - reducing it from potency to act toward the intended end"). Thus from these texts can be formu-
lated the Thomistic definition of Art: *Ars imitatur naturam in sua operatione...reducendo [eam] de potentia in actum...ad finem intentum*. This is the "work" (*operatio*) art performs; this constitutes the beauty and greatness of a work of art.

In the *De Divinis Nominibus*, where Aquinas is singing the praises of divine beauty, he again sheds light on his definition of art.

Singula sunt pulchra secundum propriam rationem, *id est secundum propriam formam*, *et sic motus et quies reducuntur in causalitatem pulchri*.

Each thing is beautiful according to its own principle, that is according to its own form,...and hence movement and rest can be ascribed as the causes of beauty.17

Upon this passage Emmanuel Chapman comments:

Unruly movements are temporally brought into dynamic repose by their proper forms. The insatiable craving, so to speak, of ever restless matter in potency to all forms, can be quieted only by actuality-giving form. Form not only communicates actuality to the matter which it organizes from within by making it to be the kind it is, but acts in other important ways. Form also energizes the tendencies it communicates to a being thus finalized by it whereby the being tends to achieve its good and other perfections by realizing itself more fully in existence, acting upon and along with other beings. The realization of form is often obstructed in nature by the opacity and resistance of matter with its unregulated craving for

17 Aquinas, *De Divinis Nominibus*, c., 4, l. 5.
other forms. Yet to the degree that the proper forms have realized themselves in their matter, or insofar as they have actualized their potentialities, or to the extent that the essences of material beings have realized themselves in existence, these natures have a corresponding degree of beauty. They also have a relative ugliness to the degree that they have not achieved the form or actuality which their natures require.18

A thing is beautiful in so far as it has moved itself toward that state in which alone it can rest, viz., its perfection; and it lacks beauty to the extent it lacks that perfection. Hence, he who would make a thing of beauty must overcome this resistance of matter by eliminating these other forms and thus help nature in its basic progress of "realizing itself more in existence;" the artist must have for his work the reduction of some form in nature from potency to act, its intended end. This metaphysical concept is the Aristotelian-Thomistic theory of imitation in art.

This idea of imitation will be further explained and exemplified in the following chapter, and a description will be given of the process by which the artist eliminates hindering forms and attains the ideal; but the repeated mention of "form" in the above quotations indicates that this imitative function

of art is closely connected with the splendor of form, which is the second canon and first required quality of a piece of fine art according to Aquinas. Hence an analysis of splendor of form must now be inaugurated.
CHAPTER III
THE CANON OF SPLENDOR OF FORM, OR CLARITY

St. Thomas lists the three qualities of a beautiful thing, hence a work of fine art, in the following text:


For beauty three things are required: first integrity or completion; hence whatever is undersize is thereby ugly. And due proportion or harmony. And also brilliance [or clarity, or splendor].

The third quality, splendor, is to be considered now. What is made clear? The form of an object; for Aquinas explains:

Singula sunt pulchra secundum propriam rationem, i.e. secundum propriam formam. Forma autem a qua dependet propria ratio rei pertinet ad claritatem.

Each thing is beautiful according to its own principle, i.e. according to its own form. The form however on which depends the object's essence pertains to the clarity of the object.

It is the being's form which is made splendid.

1 Aquinas, S.T., I. I. q. 39, a. 8, c.
2 Aquinas, De Divinis Nominibus, c. 4, l. 5.
The continual dynamic transit of a being from potency to act has been explained; the connection of this elemental motion with splendor formae is shown thus: In material beings the potency of the object is its matter and the act its form. Hence, when it is said that a thing is beautiful in proportion to the fullness, the completeness of its metaphysical activity, it is the same as saying that the thing is beautiful according to the fullness, the splendor of its form. Thus Aquinas writes again: "Pulchrum proprie pertinet ad rationem causae formalis, - Beauty especially pertains to the formal cause of an object."3

What is the "work" of art in terms of form then? The artist abstracts the form of a thing,4 which he saw limited and obscured in its material embodiment, and he puts that form into a new creation so that it is no longer opaque, but now shines out for all to behold easily. In the work of art the form has achieved the beauty and brilliance which was its original perfection in the divine mind, and toward which it tended in nature; the work of art possesses splendor formae.

Emmanuel Chapman and James Joyce furnish excellent explanations of the connection between Imitation and Splendor of Form.

---

3 Aquinas, S.T., I. I., q. 5, a. 4, ad lum.
4 Ibid., "Cognitio fit per assimilationem, similitudo autem respicit formam; pulchrum proprie pertinet ad rationem causae formalis, - An experience is attained by contact of the mind with the thing; contact however is had with the form of the thing. Beauty pertains to the formal cause of an object."
More specifically, claritas is the intelligible radiance permeating the whole of a being, the splendor of form irradiating it from within, the light of ontological truth, the knowable, adequating it to an intellect. So dazzling in itself as to be blinding to human eyes, claritas illuminates the darkness of matter so that material beings may enlighten man's intellect through his senses.  

Imagine my glimpses at that clock as the gropings of a spiritual eye which seeks to adjust its vision to an exact focus. The moment the focus is reached the object is epiphanised... By an epiphany [is] meant a sudden spiritual manifestation... It is just in this epiphany that I find the third, the supreme quality of beauty - claritas... For a long time I couldn't make out what Aquinas meant. He uses a figurative word - a very unusual thing for him; but I have solved it. Claritas is quidditas... The radiance of which he speaks is the scholastic quidditas, the whatness of a thing. [A thing has splendor formae] when its soul, its whatness, leaps to us from the vestment of its appearance. The soul of the commonest object...seems to us radiant. The object achieves its epiphany.  

Here Joyce compares the artist's clear vision of the form of a thing and his consequent radiant reproduction of that form to the human eye attaining the sight of an object in proper focus. And Joyce has grasped the idea of claritas when he calls it the epiphany of the form. Splendor of form is a

5 Chapman, 341.
6 James Joyce, Stephen Hero, A Part of the First Draft of A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, ed. from the Ms. in the Harvard College Libr. by Theodore Spencer, Vail-Ballou Press Inc., Binghampton, New York, 211, 212, 213.
refulgent ray of reality, irradiating a being from its depths and belonging to it by its very nature, a beautifying force that makes things beautiful in themselves, and, by shining forth, beautiful to us. But forms are generally too obscured by matter to be radiant in nature; whereas by the artist's genius they shine forth in art.

In every object there is the substantial form and many accidental forms. Which form does Aquinas mean when speaking of splendor formae? It is generally one, sometimes a few, accidental forms which attain radiance and are meant in the term splendor of form. One accidental form of an object catches the artist's eye and it is the perfection he idealizes in his artwork. "The artist, notwithstanding that he sees or can see the whole of an object, fixes his attention on and depicts one chosen trait." For example: in "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" the substantial forms Wordsworth is speaking about are the daffodils; but the aspect, the quality, the accidental form, which he considers in them is their gaiety and joy. For he calls them a "jocund company," "dancing," a "sprightly dance," "in glee," "in the breeze." And when he recalls them "then my

heart with pleasure fills." Again, in G.M. Hopkins' "Heaven Haven" the substantial form is religious life; but the accidental form of this life which he causes to stand out, to attain its epiphany is the peace and tranquility of such a life. For in such a life there "flies no sharp and sided hail," "no storms come," and "the green swell is in the havens dumb." Or, in "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer" the substantial form is the soul of Keats himself; but the accidental aspect which he depicts is his ecstatic pleasure on reading Homer in Chapman's translation. Then he experienced the thrill of discovery; he would shout, "Eureka!", for he "felt like some watcher of the skies," or like "stout Cortez" and his men who "star'd at the Pacific" and each other "with a wild surmise." Thus not the substantial subject is idealized in art, but some accidental aspect of that subject.

After the poet has abstracted the ideal form from the object or situation he has experienced in real natural life, his genius must recreate that being in such a manner that in his art-work the ideal form shines forth clearly (claritas) for all to behold easily. What is the nature of this artistic creation? How does the artist create a work with splendor of form?

The work of art is essentially a communication of the ideal between the artist and his audience. But if the artist is going to communicate the ideal form to his fellow human beings,
he must adapt the ideal form to the mode of human cognition, which begins with the senses. "Nihil est in intellectu quod non prius fuerit in sensibus - No knowledge reaches our minds without first passing through our senses."\(^8\) "Intellectus noster non est proportionatus ad cognoscendum naturali cognitione aliquid nisi per sensibile - Our minds are not capable of knowing anything naturally except through sensation."\(^9\) Art then must introduce the form to our intellect through our senses. This is done by once again concretizing, particularizing the universal ideal in individual details. Coleridge calls this process Aristotle's principle of the involution of the universal in the individual.\(^10\)

It must not be thought that imitation is merely the abstraction of the universal form, as is done in metaphysics or science... The chief differences are that in geometry it is the universal truth itself, which is uppermost in the consciousness, in poetry the individual form in which the truth is clothed... The ideal consists in the happy balance of the generic with the individual. The former makes the character representative and symbolical, therefore instructive; because mutatis mutandis, it is applicable to... classes of men. The latter gives it living

---

8 Aquinas, S.T., I, I., q. 84, a. 6, Sed Contra, quoting Aristotle.
9 Aquinas, Commentaria in IV Libros Sententiarum Petri Lombardi, Tipis Petri Fiaccadori, Parmae, 1856, VI, In I. Sent., III, q. 1, a. 3, ad 3um.
interest; for nothing lives or is real, but as definite and individual... (The abstract) is so modified and particularized in each person of the Shakespearean drama, that life itself does not excite more distinctly that sense of individuality which belongs to real existence. 11

The artist, like God, creates an individual object, which is material, in order to appeal to our senses and imaginations; but in his work the matter no longer limits and obscures the form; because he discriminately selects only those materials details which are sympathetic and helpful to the epiphany of his form. In telling of his joy in reading Chapman's Homer, Keats selects similarly joyful external actions and comparisons, and rejects mention of such details as the eyesore he may have sustained in his all-night perusal of such a heavy, ill-printed tome; these annoying details would detract, hinder and obscure the portrayal of his ecstasy, as they marred it to some extent in his actual experience that night.

The act of artistic creation is explained by critics thus:

We can now describe a work of art as an idealized representation...under forms manifest to sense. 12

The secret of the artist's genius lies in the capacity to express the fruit of his insight (the universal ideal) in that concrete

11 Ibid., 185, 187.
12 Butcher, 150.
representation which will show forth this typical perfection to its best advantage. 13

Of course any writer - of literature of course - in any field whatever, every time he sets down a sentence is translating his observations on life as he has known it. But when it comes to drawing a character from life and setting his personality on the printed page, nearly every writer whom I have ever met will tell you that no actual human being is convincing in this highly artificial environment. Living men and women are too limited, too far from being typical, too greatly lacking in universal appeal to serve in a properly planned piece of fiction. A successful character in a novel is a conglomerate, a combination of dozens of traits drawn from experience with hundreds of individuals, many of them half known and half forgotten; and all of these traits have been transformed by passing through the writer's mind. From the writer's standpoint it takes a vast number of disconnected memories and impressions to create a satisfactory illusion of reality. 14

Hence we can interpret in a Thomistic sense the definition of splendor formae devised by Coleridge: "Forma formans per formam formatam translucens - The form which activates the being in nature shines through that form which has been made by the artist." 15 This is the nature of artistic creation; the manner in which the artist secures splendor of form. He chooses from

15 Coleridge, 49.
among the phantasms of his imagination and memory the material
details which his artistic taste tells him will bring out the
essence of some form more clearly than its actual combination
with matter allowed. Then he reincarnates that form in those
material individuating notes, which instead of obscuring,
actually by their harmony contribute toward the clear manifesta-
tion of that form. Thus radiant, the form has achieved its
goal of perfection, and nature's metaphysical activity is com-
pleted, the striving of form towards its ideal representation
has been satisfied, the art-form is beautiful.

This finishes the explanation of the first two canons of
Thomistic aesthetics; they can now be applied to an overall
study of Macbeth. The manner in which separate characters, the
plot, setting and dialogue possess splendor of form will be
discussed in the detailed analysis of each scene of the play in
Chapters VI, VII, and VIII.

In this chapter will be determined: first, what type of art
is dealt with in this production; second, what nature is to be
imitated; third, what form of that nature is to be idealized;
fourth, how the form radiating from Macbeth is in God's mind, in
nature, in the poet's mind; fifth, how Shakespeare followed the
Thomistic theory of artistic creation in producing Macbeth; and
sixth, how his work of art, Macbeth, is an imitation of nature
and possesses in general splendor of form.
The tragedy *Macbeth* is a piece of dramatic art, and hence, as art, it is the imitation of nature in action and the concrete embellishment of an ideal form. In tragic art the nature imitated is human nature. "The original which... (drama) reflects is human action and character."\(^{16}\) Hence it is the essence of a tragedy to show the transition from potency to act of human nature; in other words, to show the development of a character. In tragic art there is a double imitation of nature's activity. Not only is there presented a form free from hindering matter, but also there is a motion picture of human nature in the very action of progressing, advancing toward that ideal. We not only see Macbeth as the ideal type of ambition, but we see him grow more and more ambitious until he becomes an ambitious fiend. We not only see Othello as the world's most jealous husband; we watch his jealousy increase until the man becomes a brilliant portrait of the form: jealousy. Thus in tragic art there is a remarkably clear example of the theory of imitation. Aristotle has even defined tragedy as an imitation of men in action. "Tragedy is an imitation, not of men, but of an action and of life, and life consists in action."\(^{17}\)

---

\(^{16}\) Butcher, 138.

\(^{17}\) Aristotle, *The Poetics*, VI., 1450a, 9 - 11, text and transl. in Butcher, 26.
In...tragedy...the entire process...[is] traced from the moment when a deed lies dormant as a germ in the mind, till it has matured into action and unfolded itself in all its consequences... We have a character in becoming.18

The ancient stage furnishes us with no such complete instance of character-development as we have, for example, in Macbeth. It is the peculiar delight of the moderns to follow the course of such an evolution, to be present at the determining moment of a man's career, to watch the dawning of a passion, the shaping of a purpose, and to pursue the deed to its final accomplishment. We desire not only to know what a man was, and how he came to be it, but to be shown each step in the process, each link in the chain; and we are the more interested if we find that the gradual course of the dramatic movement has wrought a complete change in the original character.19

S.H. Butcher does not stand alone in praising Macbeth as a fine example of character-development, of nature in action. The eminent Shakespearean scholar, A.C. Bradley writes: "An engrossing spectacle, and psychologically perhaps the most remarkable exhibition of the development of a character to be found in Shakespeare's tragedies."20 S.A. Blackmore, S.J., adds:

Shakespeare...by portraying in scene after scene his [Macbeth's] gradual transformation

18 Butcher, 363, 364.
19 Ibid., 365.
from good to evil, has given us a wondrous piece of biography. We move along step by step with the hero of the story, and perceive him, in opposition to reason and conscience, yielding himself to the influences of preternatural powers of evil, and slowly descending amid fear and terror down to the dark abyss of despair and destruction.21

How does Macbeth fulfill the general notion of imitation common to all art - that of completing nature's activity, of presenting an ideal form? To answer this, one must identify the substantial form and the accidental form chosen for portrayal by Shakespeare in Macbeth.

Tragedy imitates human nature; therefore Macbeth must exhibit the form of human nature and embellish that form with splendor in concrete garb. But the form of human nature is the human soul. Therefore the tragedy Macbeth must depict the human soul; and, to fulfill its definition, the tragedy must show the human soul in action, in development. Now, the soul with its faculties is the substantial form in man; but it is not some inert substratum, rather it is the dynamic principle of man's metaphysical yearning for perfection, of man's activities. These activities, these actions, which are the proper objects of drama, are the accidental forms inhering in that soul; they are

the actualizations of the potency, the development of the soul, the man in action. Hence the drama must select some accidental form - some action or passion of the soul - and, first, universalize it by ridding it of all distracting details, and, secondly, enhance it with attractive perceptibility in a reincarnation. This accidental form of human nature will become in its artistic reproduction what literary critics term the dominant theme of a drama. It will be so portrayed that the tragic hero has universal appeal and yet individual personality.

The drama Macbeth is a representation of human nature - it is the fictional life of the hero. It is the revelation of the soul of Macbeth as he changes from innocence to sin and sinks lower and lower into sin.

Besides this manifestation of the substantial human form, Shakespeare has also idealized, as he must, an accidental form. The form chosen is: a ruling passion.

Macbeth exposes the all important truth that every mortal is subject to temptation and must carve out his own destiny for good or evil according as he dominates or is dominated by his ruling passion. 22

In Macbeth, as a universal type, is exposed the spiritual significance of temptation common to every man, as well as the fatal folly of yielding up our free will to the powers of evil in exchange for some passion.

22 Ibid., 26.
In him the poet emphasizes the dominant idea that man, as a free and untrammeled agent, is, in the midst of temptation, with the acceptance of grace or its rejection, the architect not only of his own character for good or evil, but also of his eternal destiny.23

Yet "ruling passion," as such, is too abstract for a dramatic theme; Shakespeare must particularize it, must limit it to one specific ruling passion, one accidental form, one moral flaw, ambition. Macbeth is a play in which the form of ambition experiences its epiphany, and in the manifestation of this form lies the beauty and the force of this tragedy.

In God's Mind there "was" the complete idea of what ambition is, and in His mind this was a full picture of total unrestrained ambition. Then God created men and in each of them He put the spark of ambition, but only the spark not the whole fire. Because of his material nature no man could be the complete living embodiment of ambition, so that the one impression he infallibly made on others was that of total, unbridled ambition. God set out to create a man who has ambitious feelings, but the accent is on the man not his dominant passion. Shakespeare on the other hand set out to create an example of ambition in a man, and the stress is on the ambition. It is a difference of emphasis: God is interested in making a man - the

23 Ibid., 325.
substantial form; Shakespeare in making an ambitious man - the accidental form.

There are human beings who are ambitious in varying degrees; and each of them gives evidence of his passion in different ways. One is always scheming for a position; another is jealous of his neighbor's advancement; another constantly feels slighted; while still another nags her spouse to "get ahead." Such is human nature. Shakespeare, keenly observant of his fellowmen, noticed these little self-confessions, and with his mind abstracted the notion of ambition from each, united all the impressions for a complete picture of ambition, and possessed a universal idea of ambition similar to God's, but less clear and complete.

Shakespeare had caught this trait of ambition in men. He wished to communicate this insight to us, less keen than he, who do not perceive it in our fellowmen with the same intensity and understanding that he did. He wishes to communicate it in such a way that we cannot miss the nature and significance of this passion in a man. To do this he makes his appeal to our minds through the senses and the imagination; he reincarnates ambition in matter; he creates one individual man in whom the passion of ambition is utterly predominant. He creates the ambitious man - Macbeth. In order to make this character of his the epitome of ambition, he recalled all those little external, material
confessions of ambition he had experienced every day in his neighbors. He read and noted the salient details in the biography of an actual man who was notoriously ambitious - the historical King Macbeth of Scotland in Holinshed's Chronicles. Then he selected the most convincing of all these details and united all these mean, tell-tale qualities and actions in his character and plot. He joined the form of ambition to material notes which were sympathetic and helpful toward achieving the splendor of the form ambition. Thus in Macbeth every little detail in his character, each step in the plot, each appropriate setting, and the very dialogue contributes its ray towards illuminating the ideal: ambitious man.

That this is so can only be fully demonstrated by the scene by scene analysis of the drama. To avoid needless repetition, however, this study will be postponed until after an explanation of due proportion and integrity; and then all four canons can be applied simultaneously in the detailed consideration of Macbeth.
CHAPTER IV
THE CANON OF DUE PROPORTION

The second ontological characteristic of a beautiful object and a work of fine art is debita proportio. No matter how aestheticians may differ on other points, from Plato to the present, all agree that harmony, or order, or proportion, is an indispensable constituent of beauty. Aristotle listed proportion as one of the requisites of artistic imitation, for he says, "Art imitates objects by...harmony..."1 And he held that the beautiful is made up of order, definiteness, and symmetry.2 St. Augustine considered proportion as the prime quality of beauty, as is evident from his renowned definition of beauty as splendor ordinis - the radiance of order.3 The popular concept of beauty is centered around this condition of proportion; for, perhaps the most widely known and accepted definition of a beautiful object in nature or art is unity amid variety, which, in general, is what scholastics mean by due proportion.

Although Aquinas, because of his hylomorphic theory of imitation, assigns ontological priority to the splendor formae in the object of beauty, still he gives great importance to this

---

1 Aristotle, Poetics, 1447a, 22.
2 Aristotle, Metaphysics, 1078b.
3 Augustine, De Vera Religione, c. 4, n. 77.
second factor, and in one passage is content to mention it alone as a condition of beauty. He writes: "Unde pulchrum in debita proportione consistit - Wherefore beauty consists in due proportion." 4

What Aquinas means by proportion can be determined in an analysis of his comments on this second quality; such an analysis will also reveal that there are several diverse types of proportion necessarily present in every work of art. The more salient Thomistic texts on proportion are:

Ad pulchritudinem tria requiruntur: ... et debita proportio sive consonantia.

For beauty three qualities are required: ... and due proportion or harmony. 5

... pulchra enim dicuntur quae visa placent; unde pulchrum in debita proportione consistit, quia sensus delectantur in rebus debite proportionatis sicut in sibi similibus.

Those things are called beautiful which are pleasing to behold; hence beauty consists in due proportion, because the senses are delighted by objects duly ordered like themselves. 6

Singula sunt pulchra secundum propriam rationem, id est secundum propriam formam. Forma autem a quo dependet propria ratio rei, pertinet ad claritatem; ordo ad finem pertinet ad consonantiam.

4 Aquinas, S.T., I, q. 5, a. 4, ad lum.
5 Ibid., I, q. 39, a. 8.
6 Ibid., I, q. 5, a. 4, ad lum.
Each object is beautiful according to its own principle of existence; that is according to its own form. The form, on which depends a thing's existence, is related to the clarity [in a beautiful thing]; the thing's order to an end [is related] to the proportion [in its beauty].

Duplex est consonantia in rebus,... una secundum ordinem creaturarum [partium] in Deum [finem] ..., secunda secundum ordinationem ad invicem.

There are two types of proportion in things. ...One is the order of creatures [parts] to God [their end];... the other is their mutual order between themselves.

Now from such texts we see that the fundamental idea of proportion in Thomas' mind is a harmonious order or arrangement of parts according to a norm, which norm is the final purpose of the separate and corporate existence of these parts. The very notion of proportion signifies a relation, and a relation cannot be had without a plurality of objects. Hence, since proportion is a requisite of beauty, variety must also be a requisite. It is clear that one lone color or dot on a canvas, one lone word on a page could scarcely be beautiful, nor could a mere multiplication of that same color or word be beautiful, for there is really no order or harmony between identical objects except the drab one of identity. Hence, proportion implies a variety of parts.

7 Ibid., De Divinis Nominibus, c. 4, lect. 5 & 6.
8 Ibid., c. 4, lect. 5.
Aquinas declares proportion is equally well called consonantia. This word means "to sound with," or to harmonize. Once again harmony implies a variety of sounds, and adds the notion of a variety of many parts which are in agreement, which blend into one beautiful effect. Hence, proportion implies a unity amid that variety.

When St. Thomas comes to define proportion he maintains it consists in ordo ad finem. "Ordo ad finem... pertinet ad consonantiam." And ordo ad finem necessarily implies ordo ad invicem; for when all things are properly disposed toward their final goal, then they must be in proper order among themselves.

Now order again implies a plurality of parts which are in some arrangement; order implies a variety. But order, stronger than any of the other synonyms for proportion, conveys the notion, first, of a proper arrangement, an agreement among the parts; and secondly, of a common end toward which all the parts are directed. Order means a unity amid the variety.

The variety of a work of art is easily seen; it consists in the many colors and lines and figures of a painting, the many rhythms, rhymes and melodies of a poem or song, the many characters, settings and actions of a drama. What is the unity in art? Since the unity consists in the ordo ad finem of the

---

9 Ibid., c. 4, lect. 6.
work, and the finis of an art-work is the idealization and manifestation of a form, it follows that the unity required in due proportion consists in the harmonious cooperation of all the varied parts toward the achievement of the splendor of the form chosen for portrayal.

This manifestation of the form is the goal of art; therefore when all the parts are ordered to the fulfillment of this end, the work has due proportion. This is Aquinas' meaning when he explains, "Ordo ad finem [pertinet] ad consonantiam." Hence, it follows that a work possessing splendor formae will have it because it has due proportion; and if the second condition is lacking the first cannot be attained. The artist selects a variety of material details (as we have seen), but unless he arranges them in a due proportion or harmony, they will not achieve the unity for which they are selected, the manifestation of the form. As Callahan well says:

From this it will be evident that there is ample justification for stressing the importance of the role of proportion above that of the other factors involved in the process. To speak scholastically, variety or multiplicity of diverse things and actions represents the material cause of order; unity, the formal cause; and proportion, agreement, or harmony, the efficient cause, which accomplishes the coordination and unification of these elements in a manner best calculated to manifest the perfection of the whole.10

10 Callahan, 61.
This teleological aspect of proportion has been pointed out by commentators:

Harmony and proportion are patently connected with the attainment of an end... The very atmosphere of thought in which discussions in St. Thomas move whenever it is a question of order, harmony, proportion, purpose, and germane concepts is redolent of finality.  

Consonantia is qualitatively more than the sum of its parts; it is the ontological good of a thing.  

Of course, the ontological good of a thing is the attainment of its final end, the perfection of its being.  

This ordo ad finem in which proportion primarily consists explains what Aquinas means by debita proportio. What is the debt the parts owe? To what are they indebted? They are bound to fulfill their goal, to make radiant a form; they are in debt to form. This debt to form is twofold, so that there are two principal types of proportion, two chief ways in which the various parts of an art work must fulfill their duty to the form, which is to be epiphanized by means of their harmony. These are material and formal proportion. Eric Gill has recognized this division when he writes:  

Underlying the material measure [proportion] of things, there is a spiritual

11 Phelan, 143.
12 Chapman, 341.
Another name for material proportion is structural proportion. It consists in the skill and technique of the artist in handling his materials, in arranging them so that no one of them is out of harmony and thus draws undue attention to itself thereby distracting from the central theme. It consists in his ability to arrange his details so as to highlight his main idea, manifest the form. Aristotle gives an example of what is meant here:

...the painter will not allow the figure to have a foot, which, however beautiful, is not in proportion, nor will the shipbuilder allow the stern or any other part of the vessel to be unduly large, any more than the chorus master will allow anyone who sings louder or better than all the rest to sing in the choir.  

This material proportion is the type of proportion Aquinas was considering when he wrote that "...beautiful things had to possess due proportion, because the senses are delighted by duly ordered objects." It is the ear which perceives the rhythm and melody of poetry and music, and the eye rejoices in the symmetry of colors and lines.

A few of the more important specific divisions of material proportion are:15

**Measure:** No undue emphasis must be given any one part. Violation of this canon would distract attention from the whole, the form, to some separate part as a part.

**Emphasis:** The artist must award the important details both the most lengthy development and the most prominent places in the work of art. One obvious example of this in *Macbeth* is the fact that the lines of the hero and heroine greatly outnumber the lines of the minor characters.

**Rhythm and Restraint:** Although regular stress must be given the important elements, still there must also be a relief in between these stresses in order to heighten the effect.

**Balance and Contrast:** The qualities of one detail are demonstrated by a comparison - either of similarity or dissimilarity - with qualities of other details. Such comparisons are made in this play between Macbeth and Duncan, Macbeth and Banquo, Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, Macbeth and Edward of England, and others; all of which will be further illustrated in our last chapter.

---

15 Paul F. Speckbaugh, C.PP.S., *Some General Canons of Literary Criticism Determined from an Analysis of Art*, Murray & Heister, Washington, D.C., 1936. This treatise lists and explains at length these elements of structural proportion.
However this material proportion, though absolutely necessary, is only of minor concern in this thesis. Formal proportion is the more important. It is in formal proportion that Aquinas' definition of proportion as *ordo ad finem* assumes metaphysical implications.

It has been shown that the *finis* toward which the parts must be ordered so as to possess proportion is the splendor of the form, which is to be portrayed in the work. Because its debt is to form, this intrinsic type of proportion gets its name of formal proportion. Formal proportion consists in the proper relationship of the details to the form. Aquinas subdivides this proportion into two types: proportion of the parts to the whole (*una secundum ordinem [partium] in finem*), and proportion of the parts among themselves (*secunda secundum ordinationem ad invicem*).

The formal proportion of parts to the whole (the form) is explained thus. The form with which the various details must duly harmonize is that form in *nature* which the artist is trying to imitate in this work. Thus in dramatic art the substantial form which is imitated is the soul of man. A human nature is the subject of a drama and the actions of that character are the details of the drama, which must be proportioned to that human nature as parts to the whole. How are the actions of a fictional human being duly proportioned, or
harmonized, with the fictional human character? By being true to actual human nature, of course. The proportion of a tragedy is due if the actions of the hero are, first, true to human nature. Would a real man act the way the hero of this drama does? If the answer is affirmative, then the play has this first and most basic due proportion.

Nature, human nature, is being imitated; therefore, it is the norm. Are the actions of the imitation natural to the human form? This is tantamount to asking whether they are duly proportioned to the human form. They are duly proportioned if they show the thing as it is in nature. Thus Eric Gill writes, "Due proportion signifies that a certain thing has the proportion due to it, - the proportion which it ought to have on account of its being what it is."\(^{16}\) Truth to nature is the norm of due proportion.

But in drama human nature in general is not portrayed, rather it is an individual man, who is the subject of a play. The substantial form of that man, then, his soul, becomes the norm of the due proportion of this particular drama. The substantial form has a priority of nature to all other forms; hence it decides what accidental forms, what actions and passions, it will allow to inhere in itself. Its rule is

\(^{16}\) Gill, 148.
inviolable: *agere sequitur esse* - as a thing is so the thing acts. Therefore, to be specific, if our tragedy *Macbeth* is to possess due proportion it must satisfy two demands: First, could such a passion of ambition be in a human nature, in a human soul? Secondly, would an ambitious man act and react as Macbeth does?

This second question has carried the discussion to its final step. For as was said before, in tragedy not just the substantial form, the soul, is imitated, but the soul as modified by one dominating accidental form, one passion. "An ambitious man," that is the "whole" of our drama; the hero's actions and reactions are the "parts." If these actions are natural to such a man as Macbeth is, then the parts are duly proportioned to the whole; and they have a correct *ordo ad finem*, for the end or purpose of these actions in this drama is the portrayal of the ambitious man.

S. H. Butcher expresses the same idea in this way:

> The action which springs out of character, and reflects character, alone satisfies the higher dramatic conditions.\(^\text{17}\)

> The praxis (plot) that art seeks to reproduce is mainly an inward process, a

---

\(^{17}\) Butcher, 354.
psychical energy working outwards; deeds, incidents, events, situations being included under it as far as these spring from an inward act of the will, or elicit some activity of thought or feeling.\textsuperscript{18}

The praxis of the drama has primary reference to that kind of action which, while springing from the inward power of the will, manifests itself in external doing.\textsuperscript{19}

The second type of formal proportion is the intrinsic harmony of the parts among themselves (ordinationem ad invicem). In tragedy this consists in the natural connections of the various actions one to another. This second type of formal proportion must itself be subdivided: first, the successive actions of the hero; and secondly, the reactions of the hero to events in the plot and the setting.

Let us consider first the successive actions of the hero: This type of proportion is very important in drama, for tragedy, as has been shown, presents not so much the man, but the man in action; it shows the man as he changes, as he develops.

The change in a man is both caused and manifested by his successive actions, because actions form habits and thus become the cause of subsequent actions. Thus this proportion consists in the cause-and-effect sequence of the actions of the hero.

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 122.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 335.
If one action leads him to the next, changes his soul so that the following action is now natural, although such an extreme act might not have been natural earlier in the play before the hero had developed, then the drama possesses debita proportio of preceding action to subsequent action; then the actions are properly related among themselves. Butcher says:

Action, to be dramatic, must be exhibited in its development and in its results; it must stand in reciprocal and causal relation to certain mental states. We desire to see the feelings out of which it grows, the motive force of will which carries it to its conclusion; and again, to trace the effect of the deed accomplished upon the mind of the doer, the emotions there generated as they become in turn new factors of action, and as they react thereby on the other dramatic characters. The drama, therefore, is will or emotion in action.

The final type of formal proportion is external to the hero and is concerned with the plot and setting of the tragedy. The plot is here considered as the external circumstances, the actions of the other characters in the drama, to which the hero reacts and which influence him and drive him onward toward his downfall. If these incidents and events occur as they probably would occur in real life, then they are properly related to each other and to the hero and his passion; then they have due proportion to the "whole" and as "parts among themselves." If the

20 Ibid., 348.
outer world reacts to the hero's actions in a natural, true-to-life way, and if these normal activities of other men effect a true-to-life response and retaliation in the hero, then the plot of the play is plausible, that is, it has due proportion.\textsuperscript{21}

Moreover, if the various actions of the play take place in settings which are, first, appropriate and normal for such happenings, and secondly, conducive to heightening the effect, the splendor of action of the form (the hero), then the setting is a part of the play which is in harmony with the whole theme and with the other parts, and therefore it has due proportion.

Thus is shown in general what is meant by the Thomistic canon of due proportion. It means: all parts of the play must, first, have propriety, must be natural to the form which is the dramatic theme; and secondly, this variety of details must be in a harmony that will attain the one end of the drama, the splendor of the form.

\textsuperscript{21}This is Aristotle's theory of the probability of the plot of a tragedy. He explains that actions in a tragedy should not be as they might be in real life, but as they should be and normally would be, if chance did not interfere and if people always acted completely logically and naturally. This is of course merely an application of his theory of imitation to plot, to the activities of the form as well as to the form. If the plot is everything it should be, then it too has been idealized; brought to its perfection, or full state, and rid of the imperfections of chance and abnormality. \textit{Poetics}, 1451b.
CHAPTER V
THE CANON OF INTEGRITY

The final Thomistic canon of aesthetics is integrity. A thing is integral if it is completely one and no more than one; if it is all that it is supposed to be and no more than that. Thus when Aquinas lists the elements of beauty, he makes integrity and perfection synonymous:

\[ \textit{Ad pulchritudinem tria requiruntur: primo quidem integritas sive perfectio; quae enim diminuta sunt, hoc ipso turpia sunt.} \]

Three elements are necessary for Beauty; first is integrity or perfection; for whatever is undersize is by that very fact ugly.\(^1\)

And he explains that when dealing with integrity the word "perfection" is to be taken literally, in the sense of "\textit{per-ficere,}" to make fully, completely. He says:

\[ \textit{Integritas...attenditur secundum perfectionem...quae consistit in ipso esse rei.} \]

Integrity looks to the thing's perfection which consists in its very being.\(^2\)

Hence integrity requires at least two qualities in a work of art; first, completeness, and secondly, unity or oneness. As was said before, the work must be a whole, one, but not more

---

\(^1\) Aquinas, I, q. 39, a. 8.

\(^2\) Aquinas, \textit{Commentarum in Libros Sententiarum Petri Lombardi}, IV, dist, 26, q. 2, a. 4.
than one. That it be a whole comprises its completeness; that it not exceed one thing comprises its unity.

However, over and above these two requisites, integrity also demands a certain fullness. As Callahan says:

The condition of integrity requires that an object lack no essential parts, functions, or elements. However, there is more to this condition than a mere negative side; integrity implies a positive fullness, completeness, a richness of perfection such as can call forth the attention of the cognitive faculties, and provoke a lively pleasure.3

Aquinas mentions but two divisions of integrity in the following text:

**Duplex est integritas. Una quae attenditur secundum perfectionem primam, quae consistit in ipso esse rei; alia quae attenditur secundum perfectionem quae consistit in operatione rei.**

There are two kinds of integrity. One regards the first perfection of a thing, which consists in its very existence. The second regards that perfection which consists in the activity of a thing.4

Here St. Thomas is speaking in the first instance of the wholeness or completeness, which is demanded by integrity; and in the second instance of the unity. That he would also follow Aristotle and demand a fullness seems evident from his phrase:

---

3 Callahan, 58.
4 Aquinas, Comm. in Lib. P. Lomb., IV, dist. 26, q. 2, a. 4, c.
"quae enim diminuta, hoc ipso turpia sunt - for whatever is undersize is thereby ugly."

Completeness means that the work of art lacks no essential parts. Evidently then to determine what is a whole drama, one must discover the essential parts of a drama. These have been listed by Aristotle:

We have laid it down that a tragedy is an imitation of an action that is complete in itself, as a whole... Now a whole is that which has beginning, middle and end. 5

In modern parlance this means there must be rising action, climax, and falling action. But integral completeness not only demands the presence of these three major divisions, it also demands that each of them be complete in itself. In the rising action all the causes are presented which motivate the protagonist in his great action, which constitutes the play's climax. Now for the rising action to be complete a sufficient number of adequately powerful causes must be presented to warrant the action of the hero in the climax. In Macbeth this condition is fulfilled. His own passion of ambition, his wife, the witches, and political circumstances all impel Macbeth to the murder of Duncan. Surely these are powerful influences on him, and

5 Aristotle, Poetics, VII, 1450b.
sufficient in number to cause him to commit the crime.

In the falling action are presented the effects which result to the hero because of his action in the climax. To present a whole picture all the important natural, logical effects of such an act must be included in the falling action; and the tragedy must end with the last possible effect of all, the hero's death. In Macbeth we will see that all the normal effects are presented: he loses his honor, his peace of soul, his friends, his realm, his wife, and finally his life.

For the sake of a clearer analysis these three main divisions of drama, rising action, climax, and falling action, have been further subdivided into:

Introduction: the audience is acquainted with the chief characters and the setting; and given the situation out of which the conflict will arise.

Rising Action: the conflict develops with the fortunes of the hero in the ascendant as he moves toward his aim.

Climax: the hero attains his goal; but begins to learn that he has been deluded as to its true value, and experiences his fortunes on the decline.

Falling Action: the fortunes of the hero continue to decline.

Catastrophe: the final defeat of the hero.

Conclusion: the restoration of justice and order, which brings the drama to a calm ending avoiding the abruptness it would have,
had it ended immediately after the catastrophe.

Mention has just been made of the tragic conflict; this is another essential element in a complete drama. It consists in a struggle of opposing forces; the hero is the one force, anything against his intentions and actions is the opponent force. Thus in the rising action the hero would advance toward the climax, while other forces struggle to prevent him from attaining it. But in the falling action the hero strains to avoid the catastrophe and the opposing forces push him to it. Thus a continual conflict is the very heart of a tragedy; and this struggle is generally dual: the inner moral conflict in the hero's soul and the outer circumstantial conflict; and the hero loses both battles. Butcher writes:

"...dramatic conflict is the soul of tragedy. In every drama there is a collision of forces. Man is imprisoned within the limits of the actual. Outside him is a necessity which restricts his freedom... Again there is the inward discord of his own divided will; and further the struggle with other human wills."

Thus all the causes and effects, all the steps, in the rise and fall of this conflict must be present for a drama to be complete, to have the first type of integrity, that which is "secundum perfectionem primam," integrity of being; for a drama to be all it should be.

6 Butcher, 349.
Unity: The second type of integrity according to Aquinas is that "quae attenditur secundum perfectionem, quae consistit in operatione rei." Callahan refers to this integrity of action when he writes,

The condition of integrity requires that an object of beauty lack no essential...functions...However, the function of integrity with regard to beauty is teleological...7

When a play has all the essential parts, then it has completeness; when all these parts function, or work (operatio) toward one end, then the play has oneness or unity. When all the essential steps are linked in inevitable causal sequences driving towards one final ruinous end, then these parts are functioning teleologically, then the tragedy is a unified whole. To quote Butcher:

The notion of whole implies...that the parts which constitute it must be inwardly connected, arranged, in a certain order, structurally related, and combined into a system.8

...drama...is a poetical representation of a complete and typical action, whose lines converge on a determined end; which evolves itself out of human emotion and human will in such a manner that action and character are each in turn the outcome of the other.9

Unity is manifested in two ways. First in the causal connection that binds together the several parts of a play, - the thoughts,

7 Callahan, 58, 59.
8 Butcher, 186.
9 Ibid., 366.
the emotions, the decisions of the will, the external events being inextricably interwoven. Secondly, in the fact that the whole series of events, with all the moral forces that are brought into collision, are directed to a single end. The action as it advances converges on a definite point. The thread of purpose running through it becomes more marked. All minor effects are subordinated to the sense of ever-growing unity. The end is linked to the beginning with inevitable certainty, and in the end we discern the meaning of the whole... In this powerful and concentrated impression lies the supreme test of unity.  

In Macbeth it is clear throughout that his ambition, his wife, the witches, the growing hostility of the other lords of the realm, etc., are all relentlessly driving Macbeth to the inevitable end, his downfall and death.

Fullness: Long ago Aristotle had postulated that things had to possess a certain magnitude in order to be beautiful.  

Aquinas maintains that the Stagirite adds this third quality:

...ubi dicit quod pulchritudo non est nisi in magno corpore; unde parvi homines possunt dici commensurati et formosi, sed non pulchri.

when he says that beauty is only in large bodies; wherefore small men can be called handsome and well built, but not beautiful.

10 Ibid., 284, 285.
11 Aristotle, Poetics, 1450b; Metaphysics, 1078a.
Again, as has been seen, Aquinas remarks that those things which are undersize (diminuta) are therefore ugly.

Precisely what this magnitude or fullness consists in is best explained by Callahan:

Integrity demands not only that the object lack nothing essential, but that it possess in a marked degree a certain fullness of vigor and life, in order that it may evoke the lively pleasure which characterizes esthetic experience. The importance of this factor in arousing a sense of beauty is evidenced by everyday experience. An aspect of nature which suggests incompleteness and imperfection, such as a barren field, leaves us cold and indifferent. The same piece of land at a different season of the year, covered with rich crops, enlivened by the myriad tints of its vegetation, may provide a lively esthetic stimulus, in that it arouses the mind by its suggestion of richness, vitality, and energy.13

Flaccus is expressing this same idea when he writes:

The beautiful is complete and all of a piece. The unity that it has is a living unity: a common life flows back and forth from part to part and glows with a warmth and glamour in every enhanced and enhancing part.14

An example which clearly illustrates the point is the face of a young girl. In order to be beautiful it must be, first, complete; if an eye is missing she cannot be beautiful. It

---

13 Callahan, 59.
must, next, be one; she would be far from beautiful with two noses. But given completeness and oneness, still there are many girls who are not beautiful. But put the pink of health on the cheeks and the light of innocence in the eye, and the girl has the richness, the fullness that makes her beautiful.

This third quality of integrity comes very close to splendor formae; but can be considered separately as the crowning point of integrity.

In tragedy this fullness amounts to three things: a great character, a great plot, and a vivid setting. The hero must be above the ordinary, and the plot must have momentous repercussions, such as the tragic death of many or of notable people.

Within the limited circle of a bourgeois society a great action is hardly capable of being unfolded... Some quality of greatness in situation as well as in characters appears to be all but indispensable, if we are to be raised above the individual suffering.15

The tragedy requires that suffering shall be exhibited in one of its comprehensive aspects; that the deeds and fortunes of the actors shall attach themselves to larger issues, and the spectator himself be lifted above the special case and brought face to face with universal law and the divine plan of the world.16

15 Butcher, 271.
16 Ibid., 271.
Certainly the characters in Macbeth are great; first, they are nobility, even royalty; secondly, they are magnificent in the momentous importance of their actions. In the plot of Macbeth hundreds of citizens are killed by the tyrant, innocent women and children are murdered, the whole kingdom is upset, and the king (Duncan) and the tyrant-king (Macbeth) are slain. Surely these are great persons and great events occurring in highly decorative settings.

These three conditions then, completeness, unity and fullness comprise integrity, the last of the four Aristotelian-Thomistic canons of beauty and art - imitation, splendor of form, due proportion, and integrity.

Summary of Chapters I to V

Before advancing to our application of these four principles to the tragedy of Macbeth, it will be advantageous to assemble into one paragraph the pithy but comprehensive doctrine of Aquinas on fine art. As these texts have now been explained, we are in a position to understand and appreciate the fullness of meaning in phrase and word. Regarding fine art Thomas Aquinas holds:

Pulchritudo creaturae nihil aliud est quam similitudo divinae pulchritudinis in rebus participata...Ars imitatur naturam in sua operatione...reducendo [am] de potentia in actum...ad finem intentum...Ad pulchritudinem tria requiruntur: primo quidem integritas sive perfectio;...et debita proportio.
sive consonantia; et iterum claritas.

...Integritas... attenditur secundum perfectionem quae consistit in ipso esse rei.
...Singula sunt pulchra secundum propriam rationem, id est secundum propriam formam.
Forma autem a qua dependet propria ratio rei, pertinet ad claritatem; ordo ad finem [pertinet] ad consonantiam... Pulchra dicuntur quae visá placent.

The beauty of creatures is nothing else than a reflection of the divine beauty participated in by those creatures of nature. Art has for its work the imitation of this nature, by reducing nature from potency to act to the intended ideal end.

There are three constituents of beauty: first, integrity or perfection; then due proportion or harmony; and finally clarity. Integrity regards that perfection which constitutes the very existence of a beautiful thing. Each thing is beautiful according to its principle of existence, that is, according to its form. The form, however, on which a thing depends for its existence is connected with the quality of clarity in a beautiful thing; the beautiful object's order toward a purpose or end pertains to its due proportion. Therefore things are called beautiful which are pleasing to behold and contemplate.17

---

17 Aquinas, De Divinis Nominibus, IV, lect. 5 & 6.
Commentarium in Libros Sententiarum Petri Lombardi, IV, dist. 26, q. 2, a. 4.
S.T., I, q. 117, a. 1.
I, q. 39, a. 8.
I, q. 5, a. 4, ad lum.
CHAPTER VI
APPLICATION OF THE FOUR CANONS
TO THE
INTRODUCTION OF MACBETH

As one begins an application of the four scholastic canons to the tragedy of Macbeth he should travel in imagination to London or to Broadway and enter some theater where this drama is being acted. There he would notice that the house was filled. Once in his seat, while waiting for the performance to begin, he could recall that it had always been thus with this play. Wherever and whenever for the past two hundred and fifty years Macbeth was played, it generally has been well attended. Then to these hundreds of thousands of theater-goers, who have beheld Macbeth on the boards, he could add, allowing his fancy further to roam, the millions who have read and enjoyed the play by their firesides. Finally, he would find himself reflecting on his own presence in that theater; and he would be convinced that both historical testimony and conscious testimony are infallible proofs that Macbeth est id quod visum placet. Yes, the experience of thousands is evidence that this play has fulfilled the empirical definition of fine art laid down by Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth century.

As the spectator would be wondering on this, the house-
lights would dim, the curtain rise, and he would learn the reason for the popularity and artistic greatness of this masterpiece.

When shall we three meet again
In thunder, lightning, or in rain?
When the hurlyburly's done,
When the battle's lost and won...
Fair is foul, and foul is fair;
Hover through the fog and filthy air.¹

The drama opens with the Weird Sisters; and the "true reason" for this first scene of Act One, according to Coleridge, is "to strike the keynote of the character of the whole drama."² This keynote is a point in the formal proportion of the drama. Shakespeare is giving the play a setting and tone of darkness and mystery right from the beginning.

Darkness, we may even say blackness, broods over this tragedy. It is remarkable that almost all the scenes which at once recur to memory take place either at night or in some dark spot. The vision of the dagger, the murder of Duncan, the murder of Banquo, the sleep-walking of Lady Macbeth, all come in night-scenes. The Witches dance in the thick air of a storm, or 'black and midnight hags' receive Macbeth in a cavern. The blackness of night is to the hero a thing of fear, even of horror; and that which he feels becomes the spirit of the play.³

Such a weird, dark setting has excellent formal proportion as it not only is the natural backdrop for the evil deeds which are to follow, but also it puts the audience into the mood of the play, thus shedding the first small ray of splendor on the form.

In Scene Two Shakespeare immediately gives the other dominant setting of the play: the color of blood. "What bloody man is that?" 4

It cannot be an accident that the image of blood is forced upon us continually, not merely by the events themselves, but by full descriptions, and even by reiteration of the word in unlikely parts of the dialogue. The Witches, after their first wild appearance, have hardly quitted the stage, when there staggers onto it a "bloody man," gashed with wounds. His tale of a hero whose "brandished steel smoked with bloody execution," "carved out a passage" to his enemy, and "unseam'd him from the nave to the chops"...What pictures are those of the murderer appearing at the door of the banquet-room with Banquo's "blood upon his face;" of Banquo himself "with twenty trenched gashes on his head," or "blood-bolter'd" and smiling in derision at his murderer; of Macbeth, gazing at his hand, and watching it dye the whole green ocean red; of Lady Macbeth, gazing at hers, and stretching it away from her face to escape the smell of blood that all the perfumes of Arabia will not subdue. The most horrible lines in the whole tragedy are those of her shuddering cry, "Yet who would have thought the old man to have so much blood in him?"...It is as if the poet saw the whole story through an ensanquined

4 Shakespeare, Macbeth, I, ii, 1.
mist, and as if it stained the very blackness of the night. 5

Darkness, mystery, blood - what more appropriate or impressive a beginning could a tale of murder have? Appropriate and impressive are adjectives which indicate the due proportion and splendor of form in this initial setting of Macbeth.

This second scene of Act One is extremely important. In it is given the opening situation of the plot: there has been a rebellion against King Duncan. But much more important, through the reports of the sergeant and of Ross, Shakespeare gives the first picture of the hero, Macbeth. This picture must be carefully analyzed. The significant part of these two speeches is the lavish praise of Macbeth's courage and capability in military action given in them, and the favorable reception accorded this news by the King and his retinue. The Thane of Cawdor had turned traitor and rebelled against his king. The man who distinguished himself by his courage and ability in the loyal defense of the crown was Macbeth. The sergeant reports that thus he subdued Cawdor:

For brave Macbeth - well he deserves that name -
Distaining fortune, with his brandish 'd steel,
Which smo'k with bloody execution,

5 Bradley, 335, 336.
Like valour's minion carved out his passage
Till he fac'd the slave;
Which ne'er shook hands, nor bade farewell
to him,
Till he unseam'd him from the nave to th' chops,
And fixed his head upon our battlements. 6

Ross adds that the King of Norway, an ally of Cawdor, was beginning a new assault,

Till that Bellona's bridegroom, lapp'd in proof,
Confronted him with self-comparisons,
Point against point, rebellious arm 'gainst arm,
Curbing his lavish spirit; and, to conclude, The victory fell on us. 7

King Duncan shows his high esteem and regard for Macbeth in his reactions to these announcements:

O valiant cousin! worthy gentleman! 8
What he hath lost, noble Macbeth hath won. 9

We have already seen that Ross, a nobleman of Scotland, thought well of Macheth. That other important men in the realm also regarded him highly is revealed by their salutations of him as "most worthy thane," 10 "noble sir," 11 "Good sir," 12

6 Shakespeare, Macbeth, I, ii, 16-23.
7 Ibid., I, ii, 54-58.
8 Shakespeare, Macbeth, I, ii, 24.
9 Ibid., I, ii, 67.
10 Ibid., I, iii, 106.
11 Ibid., II, iii, 27.
12 Ibid., I, iii, 51.
"My noble partner,"¹³ and so forth. Macbeth's position is well indicated by the remark of Malcolm to Macduff, a man of more than ordinary prudence, that "you have loved him [Macbeth] well."¹⁴ If Macduff once "loved" him, Macbeth was once worth that esteem.

Thus the first picture Shakespeare gives of Macbeth is as a brave man, outstanding in his king's defense, an able man of action, and well thought of by his peers, especially Banquo and Macduff, two men of evident ability and intelligence.

This good side of Macbeth's character must be strongly insisted upon and proven, in order to show that this play possesses that special type of imitation peculiar to dramatic art - that of providing a motion picture of nature in its transit from potency to act. This play must show Macbeth's character developing, changing. But if he is already a bad man, a vicious, ruthless, ambitious schemer, when the play begins, then there can be no change except from bad to worse. And such a plot is against all Aristotelian principles, which demand a change from good to bad.¹⁵ Aristotle's ideal tragic hero must be more good than bad.

¹³ Ibid., I, iii, 53.
¹⁴ Ibid., IV, iii, 13.
Aristotle mentions the case which in his view answers all the requirements of art. It is that of a man who morally stands midway between the two extremes. He is not eminently good or just, though he leans to the side of goodness. \[\text{μέτριος \ μέλλων \ ἡ \ Χείρωνος}.\]

For this play to be an imitation of nature's constant motion from potency to act, it must demonstrate Macbeth's character changing from innocence to guilt. That the play does this, that Macbeth is innocent and a good character as the curtain rises can be proven from the sources Shakespeare studied to obtain material for this play, from the commentaries of noted critics, and from the text itself.

Shakespeare conceived the idea for this play while reading about the actual Macbeth of Scottish history as portrayed in the Chronicles of Holinshed; and although he undoubtedly greatly altered his material, adding and dropping details according to their usefulness in clarifying the form of ambition - as the process of artistic creation and imitation demands - still the real Macbeth was in his mind as he painted his own hero. Now Holinshed describes Macbeth as "...a valiant gentleman and one, if he had not beeene somewhat cruell of nature, who might have beeene thought most woorthy the gouernement of a realme."

16 Butcher, 304.
The historian sums up his account of Macbeth: "In the first years of his reign he accomplished many worthy acts, very profitable to the commonwealth; but afterward by illusion of the devil, he defamed the same with most terrible cruelty."\(^{18}\)

Moreover, as the play begins Macbeth had no motive whatever for unlawful aspirations to the throne; for Holinshed tells us that in Scotland the crown was not hereditary, but the monarch was elected by the lords of the realm. Hence, Macbeth did not have to contemplate violent means until circumstances, which occur in the play itself, forced his hand. Therefore the Macbeth Shakespeare saw in history was originally a noble character, who as the history tells us, became a tyrant. Such was the real character in nature, whom the playwright imitated in his fictional Macbeth.

The critics also pronounce Macbeth innocent and virtuous at the play's beginning.

Macbeth is introduced to us as a renowned warrior, loyal to his king and honored by his peers. "A worthy gentleman," whose sense of duty, and love and esteem of honor, have preserved his name untainted. Shakespeare however by portraying in scene after scene his gradual transformation from good to evil, has given us a wondrous piece of biography.\(^{19}\)

---

18 Ibid., 393.
19 Blackmore, 62.
Macbeth is introduced to us as a...general of extraordinary prowess and great personal courage...who has covered himself with glory. A great warrior, somewhat masterful, rough and abrupt, a man to inspire some fear and much admiration. He was thought "honest" or honorable; he was trusted, apparently by everyone; Macduff, a man of highest integrity, "loved him well." And there was in fact much good in him. The phrase "too much milk of human kindness" is applied to him; he was not a half-hearted cowardly criminal, but he was far from devoid of humanity and pity.20

Macbeth does not start with criminal purpose. In its original quality his nature was not devoid of nobility.21

Shakespeare has given us hardened villains before in other places. But here he unveils the process by which the thought of crime penetrates a virtuous soul, the destruction it causes as soon as it gains lodgement there, and to what extremities it drags him who has not strength enough to repel it on its first appearance. Macbeth is not wicked like Iago, or Edmund in Lear. He even begins well. He has defended his country and his king most zealously, and covered himself with glory on two battlefields. His comrades in arms accord him ungrudging praise, and Duncan knows not how to recompense his deserts. But this brave soldier bears within him the germ of ambition.22

R.S. Moulton, Irving, Quiller-Couch, E.K. Chambers and other Shakespearean critics could also be quoted as holding this same opinion on the innocence of the hero Macbeth as the

20 Bradley, 477.
21 Butcher, 322.
22 A. Mezieres, Shakespeare, ses Oeuvres et ses Critiques, Paris, 1860, in Furness, 460.
The play opens.

To these proofs from external criticism and authority can be added that of internal criticism. The text itself reveals Macbeth as a good man at the drama's opening. His bravery in the defense of his country and his position of honor in the minds of his fellowmen has already been shown. Another textual proof is drawn from his actions and reactions when he is confronted with the performance of some immoral action. As each of these occur in the play they will be commented upon; here will be merely pointed out a few instances where Macbeth's conscience troubled him sorely, so sorely in fact that Furnivall calls this a "play of conscience."23

In Act One, Scene Three, after the witches have first incited his passion of ambition, his conscience warns him:

This supernatural soliciting
Cannot be ill; cannot be good; if ill
Why hath it given me earnest of success,
If good, why do I yield to that suggestion
Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair
And make my seated heart knock at my ribs,
Against the use of nature.24

Again in Act One, Scene Five, when his thoughts first turn to the necessity of using sinful measures to secure the throne, conscience again admonishes:

24 Shakespeare, Macbeth, I, iii, 130 - 137.
Stars, hide your fires;
Let not light see my black and deep desires.  

Then in Act One, Scene Seven, as he ponders the murder of Duncan the inner voice bothers him terribly:

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. Besides, this Duncan
Hath borne his faculties so meek, hath been
So clear in his great office, that his virtues
Will plead like angels, trumpet-tongu'd, against
The deep damnation of his taking-off;
And pity, like a naked new-born babe
Striding the blast, or heaven's cherubim hors'd
Upon the sightless couriers of the air,
Shall blow the horrid deed in every eye,
That tears shall drown the wind.  

Finally, in Act Two, Scene Two, immediately after he has committed the crime he suffers the religious scruple:

When they did say, 'God bless us!'
...wherefore could I not pronounce 'Amen'?
I had most need of blessing, and 'Amen'
Stuck in my throat.  

The voice of conscience is not so alive, not so insistent in a hardened sinner. In fact at the close of this play, when

25 Ibid., I, iv, 50, 51.
26 Ibid., I, vii, 12 - 26.
27 Ibid., II, ii, 29, 31 - 33.
Macbeth has become that hardened sinner, he confesses that he has killed his conscience:

I have almost forgot the taste of fears;
The time has been, my senses would have cool'd
To hear a night-shriek,...I have supp'd full with horrors;
Direness, familiar to my slaughterous thoughts,
Cannot once start me. 28

But in the rising action of the play his conscience is very active; in fact the necessary tragic conflict of the rising action is between Macbeth's passion and tempters, who urge him to the murder, and his conscience, which endeavors to dissuade him from the sin. Thus the conflict is "the inward discord of the hero's own divided will." 29

Macbeth's active conscience is a final proof of his innocence as the play begins; hence in this tale Macbeth changes or develops as is required by dramatic imitation.

However before leaving this matter of Macbeth's conscience it will be well to demonstrate how this detail of the play complies with our four canons. Would a story of a man yielding to his passion and falling into mortal sin be complete without mention of his conscience? Would such a tale be natural, true-to-life? No. Therefore the detail of conscience is all

29 Butcher, 349.
necessary for integrity and due formal proportion. How natural such actions are to the soul of a man such as Macbeth; surely such mental activities are in harmony with his soul, i.e. have the proportion due the form.

But experience teaches us that the admonitions of conscience are the dull, plain moral commands: "Do!" or "Don't!" Nothing poetic about these words. Hence Shakespeare in presenting this fact of conscience in his work of art had to materialize and concretize these moral precepts in some way. This for two reasons: first, because he had to make this purely spiritual, internal fact perceptible to the senses and imaginations of his audience in order to communicate it to them. Such involvement of abstract natural law in concrete sensible details is required by artistic creation in the process of imitation, as has been explained in Chapter II. Secondly, he had to take this commonplace thing (or form) of conscience and make it strikingly beautiful and impressive, he had to give this form a splendor. So he made Macbeth's voice of conscience speak to him through the inner sense faculty of his imagination in vivid poetic diction.

Macbeth has one marked peculiarity - an imagination - which keeps him in contact with supernatural impressions and liable to supernatural fears. Through it come to him intimations of conscience and honor. Macbeth's better nature, instead of speaking to him in the overt language of moral ideas, commands, and prohibitions, incorporates itself in images, which alarm and
horrify. His imagination is thus the best of him... If he had obeyed it he would have been safe; [for] the moral principles of his conscience become incarnate in the insistent visionary fears and warnings. 30

The truth of this statement is revealed by a study of the texts cited above. In the first some "horrid image doth unfix" his "hair, And make" his "heart knock." In the second with the guilty feeling of conscience he calls upon the "Stars" to "hide your fires" and "let not light see my black and deep desires." Here he realizes the sinfulness of his thoughts and, first, would not have anyone know of them as much from a feeling of shame as from a desire for the secrecy needed for success; and, second, he wishes that such sinful plans may never see the light, never be put into effect.

In the third instance his conscience incorporates itself in particularly vivid and imaginative language. Macbeth imagines himself "shutting the door," "bearing the knife." Duncan's virtues are viewed as trumpeting angels, pity assumes the form of a "naked, new-born babe," cherubim ride through the air, and "tears drown the wind," his passion pricks him like a spur, and he fancies himself mounting and falling from a horse. This is the voice of conscience speaking in highly poetical language indeed; this is the natural phenomenon (or

30 Bradley, 353.
form) of conscience portrayed with a perfection and a splendor, which it does not have in real life, but which it must have in ideal imitation.

Two traits of the personality of the hero have been shown: his initial innocence and his powerful voice of conscience. This picture of the hero's soul as the play opens is all-important, because as it is then it is the potency which is going to develop, his soul is the principle which is going to determine the due proportion of his subsequent actions in the play. Therefore Macbeth's personality must be clearly understood.

Externally he is a brave capable man of action; internally he is a good man with a strong conscience. But this is far from a picture of Macbeth as the play begins. As Mezieres has already remarked, "But this brave soldier bears within him the germ of ambition." This man, like all men, has a predominant passion, some weak spot, some special leaning to a particular type of sin. As Blackmore has said,

Macbeth exposes the all important truth that every mortal is subject to temptation and must carve out his own destiny for good or evil, according as he dominates or is dominated by his ruling passion.31

31 Blackmore, 26.
That a tragic hero have such a flaw in his nature is required by Aristotle. He must be a man who falls through some considerable fault of his own.\(^{32}\)

Aristotle mentions the case which in his view answers all the requirements of art. It is that of a man who morally stands midway between the two extremes. He is not eminently good or just, though he leans to the side of goodness. He is involved in misfortune, not, however, as a result of deliberate vice, but through some great flaw of character, or fatal error of conduct.\(^{33}\)

The truth, the naturalness, and therefore the due proportion of representing the predominant passion yielded to or overcome as the determining factor in a man's life is attested to by ascetical writers.

It has been said that a man's biography is a portrait of his predominant passion working itself out in his life and actions. And rightly so, for, just as a portrait is a likeness of a man's external appearance, so a biography is a likeness of his internal disposition. A portrait must faithfully represent the cast of his countenance, the expression of his eyes, the carriage of his body, everything in a word that enables us to recognize him at a glance. The filling out of the picture, the shading and coloring, the last delicate touches which give it life and finish, must all serve to bring out to advantage his distinctive traits. In like manner, a biography must faithfully represent his temper of mind, his principles of conduct, and all else that helps to make him better known. The particular facts recorded of him, his relations with others,

\(^{32}\) Aristotle, Poetics, 1453a.

\(^{33}\) Butcher, 304.
the episodes and incidents which relieve the monotony of the narrative, must all tend to illustrate his personal character. Now, it is a man's predominant passion which, more than aught else, contributes to mark his character, and which imparts to his whole life its own peculiar tone and color. It influences alike the saint and the sinner. It conducts the former to perfection and hurries the latter to perdition. It frequently decides upon the future career of the young, and shapes their destiny for time and eternity. It influences, on all occasions, to have the upper hand, to control and to govern; and, however much it may have been thwarted and repressed, it infallibly re-asserts itself, as soon as it has the slightest opportunity. Thence its name of predominant or ruling passion. To know it is to possess the key to a man's interior disposition, to his capabilities and his weaknesses, to his attractions and his aversions. To subjugate it is to win a complete victory over perverse nature.

Therefore before one can witness the "life and actions" of Macbeth, he must possess this "key" to his character, otherwise he cannot understand and appreciate this portrait of his life, which "is but his predominant passion working itself out."

The passion which fights for mastery in Macbeth's soul as the play begins is ambition. This can be seen by the few textual references to actions occurring before the play, and by Macbeth's actions when he first appears upon the stage. Read the letter he writes to his wife after his first meeting with

the witches:

They met me in the day of success; and I have learn'd by the perfect'st report, they have more in them than mortal knowledge. When I burn'd in desire to question them further, they made themselves air, into which they vanish'd. Whiles I stood rapt in the wonder of it, came missives from the King, who all-hail'd me "Thane of Cawdor"; by which title, before, these weird sisters saluted me, and referr'd me to the coming on of time, with "Hail, king that shalt be!" This have I thought good to deliver thee, my dearest partner of greatness, that thou mightst not lose the dues of rejoicing, by being ignorant of what greatness is promis'd thee. Lay it to thy heart and farewell.35

Such a letter implies a great deal of past action and mutual understanding between the sender and the recipient. The fact that he addresses his wife as his "dearest partner of greatness," and knows that she will "rejoice" at this news, and would have her cherish in her heart the dream of "what greatness is promis'd thee," all these speak convincingly of ambitious colloquies between the two in the past; and these discussions must have been ardent and intense, judging from the tone of his letter, but especially from her reaction when receiving it.

In the letter Macbeth confesses his reactions to the announcements of the witches: "I burned in desire to question them further," "I stood rapt in the wonder of it." These are

admissions of a passion of ambition burning in his soul.

But it must here again strongly be insisted upon that there is no reason at this point in the play for calling this passion sinful. It is a strong passion, yes, but not necessarily a sinful one and bad one; a man and his wife can justly ambition to become king and queen, when, as was the case in Scotland, the king is elected according to his merit, and when, as was the case with Macbeth, the husband possessed that required merit as his valiant actions show. This is the meaning of Lady Macbeth's summary of her husband's character:

Thou would'st be great;
Art not without ambition, but without
The illness should attend it. What thou
would'st highly
That would'st thou holily.36

She - and who knows him better - says he is ambitious but innocent!

A complete picture of the protagonist's character at the play's opening, then, is: a capable, courageous man of action, esteemed by his friends, possessing two marked traits, a forceful conscience and a strong but innocent passion of ambition. This is the man in whom the form ambition is to be portrayed with a splendor; this is the substantial form which is the norm of the due proportion of all the following actions - an innocent

36 Ibid., I, v, 15 - 18.
man with a definite potentiality to a definite guilt; and the theme of the tragedy is his natural change from potentially guilty ambition to the full actuality of fiendish ambition.
CHAPTER VII

APPLICATION OF THE FOUR CANONS

TO THE

RISING ACTION IN MACBETH

The hero has been introduced; the setting and situation indicated. The plot is now about to begin to move, the passion or theme-form of the hero to develop naturally.

The very first step which would naturally increase Macbeth's ambition is his success in the battle and the acclaim others paid him for this. This is the first force in the drama itself which leads to the climax, the murder of Duncan, and even to the catastrophe, the death of the ambitious man. It is a duly proportioned part because it is a normal cause or stimulus to the growth of Macbeth's passion, and thus starts him on his way toward becoming the acme of ambition. Thus from the first scene this tragedy is tending toward its culmination so that the play possesses in a remarkable degree that unity demanded by integrity; "the end is linked to the beginning with inevitable certainty."

The second factor in the play, which would naturally cause a rise in Macbeth's ambition to become king, is the lack of

1 Butcher, 285.
ability to rule in the present King Duncan. Duncan plainly was no soldier and in those rugged days a king had to be the leader of his men in battle. Why wasn't Duncan himself in charge of the forces defending his throne against the rebel, instead of delegating the command to Macbeth, thereby giving the Thane of Glamis an opportunity for the success and glory which stirred up his passion? If Duncan had been the firm ruler he should have been, Cawdor would never even have attempted the revolt, and the King of Norway would not have thought his neighboring monarch an easy mark for an invasion.

If one argues that Duncan was old, his inability can still be shown from his reaction to the news of the battle given by the sergeant and Ross. When told that Cawdor had been joined by the forces of Norway, he asks,

\[
\text{Dismay'd not this} \\
\text{Our captains, Macbeth and Banquo?}^2
\]

Thus his first reaction to the new threat is one of fear, and he worries lest those who are defending him reacted in the same craven way. Moreover, the very fact that Duncan was advanced in years, and was a kinsman of his, would give Macbeth all the more hope of soon attaining his ambition.

---

Probably the most convincing proof that Duncan lacked the prudence needed to be a good king occurs in Act One, Scene Four:

There's no art
(Duncan) To find the mind's construction in the face;
He [Cawdor] was a gentleman on whom I built An absolute trust.

(Enter Macbeth, Banquo)
O worthiest cousin! 3

What magnificent tragic irony! 4 The king confesses he is a poor judge of men, and too easily puts trust in his thanes; and in the next breath addresses his murderer as "worthiest cousin." Duncan was a good man, much loved by his subjects because he "hath borne his faculties so meek, hath been so clear in his great office," but mildness and justice alone are vulnerable without prudence and fortitude. This weakness in Duncan is the next natural, and therefore duly proportioned, step in the rise of Macbeth's ambition. The rising action is developing.

As the curtain rises on Scene Three an extremely important part of the rising action is enacted. The Weird Sisters return to the stage and after a few incantations for the sake of setting, they appear to Macbeth and Banquo and make their prophecies for both of them.

3 Ibid., I, iv, 11 - 14.
It is all-important for the integrity, proportion, and the splendor of form of this drama to understand the role of the Weird Sisters in Macbeth's life. They are Shakespeare's artistic representation of diabolic temptation. This does not mean that they are devils in the shape of witches; rather it means that these three women are old hags possessed by the devil, or at least used by him as means to tempt Macbeth. That old witches were instruments of the devil was a widespread superstition in Shakespeare's day, so that as soon as the Weird Sisters appeared on the stage, the overtones of the preternatural and the diabolic were conveyed to his audience.

Among the critics, Hudson, Quiller-Couch, Spalding, Horn, Schlegel, Petri, Moulton, Kirke, Furnivall, Bradley, Blackmore, and others hold this interpretation of the nature and the role of the Weird Sisters: To quote only three:

In order not to miss the key to the tragedy of Macbeth, we must acknowledge that there is outside the world of man a realm of demons whose dark secret powers seek to gain an influence over human souls, and do gain it, except in so far as they are opposed. Temptation advances through the medium of the witches.6

To ignore Satanic temptation is to miss the key to the tragedy. Shakespeare and his

5 Moritz Petri, Zur Einführung Shakespeare's in die Christliche Familie, Hanover, 1868, in Furness, 453.
audience knew they were evil spirits, for to the popular mind of Shakespeare's day witches were but the willing and wicked instruments of evil spirits that sought to inflict injury on mankind. If we accept them as devils, much better as hags possessed by devils, it is the easiest explanation of their prescience of the future.  

Moreover from the text also it is shown that Macbeth clearly recognized them as "supernatural solicitings, instruments of darkness, not like the inhabitants o' the world." The clearest indication of the playwright as to their nature is given in the mouth of Banquo, who, referring to their prophecies, exclaims in unmistakable terms, "What, can the devil speak true?"

The devil, then, through the witches greets Macbeth and Banquo with the triple salutation:

All hail, Macbeth! hail to thee, thane of Glamis!
All hail, Macbeth! hail to thee, thane of Cawdor!
All hail, Macbeth! that shall be king hereafter!

Notice when the devil chooses to make his attack. "They met me in the day of success," Macbeth himself tells us. What more natural time for the devil to tempt Macbeth with ambitious

7 Blackmore, 31, 38, 42, 43, et passim.
8 Shakespeare, Macbeth, I, iii, 124, 130.
9 Ibid., I, iii, 107.
10 Ibid., I, iii, 48 - 50.
prophecies than on that day. As Blackmore says, "The Weird Sisters surprise Macbeth in the moment of intoxication after his victory, when his love of glory has been gratified." Truly the placing of this detail at this point in the rising action has due proportion, is true-to-life, for it is in accord with the rules laid down by Ignatius Loyola for the discernment of spirits, where he writes:

The devil as an able general, who wishes to capture a citadel, first takes a careful survey to find out where is the weakest and best open to attack and then begins the assault and exerts his force against us at the particular point where we are weakest.

Certainly their conformity to the Ignatian rules should help the critic "discern" the nature of these spirits.

Macbeth reacts to their greetings in a way most natural in a man taking another step on the road to sin and ruin. He is pleased with their words. "He seems rapt withal;" he "burn'd in desire to question them further;" and he charges them, "Stay, tell me more!"

This is another natural advance toward sin; he flirts with temptation instead of immediately repelling it; he commits the

11 Blackmore, 26.
fatal error of all sinners who neglect to "resist the beginnings"\(^{13}\) of temptation.

The ambition in Macbeth is now naturally developing as imitation and proportion demand; that form is becoming more clear as splendor formae demands. This step is intrinsically linked with his final ruin as integral unity demands.

A point of structural proportion should be noted here. The poet has made Macbeth's passionate response to temptation all the more vivid by contrasting it with Banquo's reaction. After all, Banquo received a message also.

\begin{quote}
Lesser than Macbeth, and greater,
Thou shalt get kings, tho' thou be none.\(^{14}\)
\end{quote}

To Macbeth this prediction will afterwards prove a great worry and thus already the conflict of falling action is foreshadowed; but Banquo is not unduly aroused by it. He describes himself as one among those "who neither beg nor fear your favours or your hate."\(^{15}\) Thus he has the correct manner of meeting Satan, insulting him. And he gives Macbeth good advice:

\begin{quote}
And oftentimes, to win us to our harm,
The instruments of darkness tell us truths;
Win us with honest trifles, to betray's
In deepest consequence.\(^{16}\)
\end{quote}


\(^{14}\) Shakespeare, \textit{Macbeth}, I, iii, 66, 68.

\(^{15}\) Ibid., I, iii, 60, 61.

\(^{16}\) Ibid., I, iii, 123 - 126.
The excellent Sophoclean irony of these lines needs no comment.

The next step in the growth of Macbeth's passion is the announcement by Ross, who comes from the king, that, "He bade me, from him, call thee thane of Cawdor." After this new honor is explained Macbeth muses to himself:

(Aside). Two truths are told,
As happy prologues to the swelling act
Of the imperial theme.

Macbeth himself realizes that his ambition is swelling; and immediately his conscience chides him in the manner already described:

This supernatural soliciting
Cannot be ill; cannot be good; if ill
Why hath it given me earnest of success,
If good, why do I yield to that suggestion
Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair
And make my seated heart knock at my ribs,
Against the use of nature.

Yet immediately his thoughts turn back to his ambitious day-dreams: "If chance will have me king, why chance may crown me." Now the conflict of the rising action, the moral struggle in Macbeth's soul, is started in earnest. Such conflict between passion and conscience is most natural and integral to this drama of ambition.

17 Ibid., I, iii, 105.
18 Ibid., I, iii, 127 - 129.
19 Ibid., I, iii, 130 - 137.
20 Ibid., I, iii, 143.
The inner conflict is started; and immediately Shakespeare inaugurates the external circumstantial conflict of plot also. For in the same scene Duncan shatters Macbeth's ambitions for a legal kingship, when he announces:

We will establish our estate upon
Our eldest, Malcom.21

In appointing Malcolm as his successor Duncan actually did an injustice to Macbeth and the other thanes, as has been shown. It was their privilege to elect the next king, and Macbeth, who, as a kinsman of Duncan, therefore of noblest blood, had so recently won the esteem of all so as to expect their votes, and who especially had just heard a prophecy that he would be the next king, must have received a terrific shock at this turn of events. That Shakespeare intended this to be the plot can be gathered from the fact that this was the case with the historical Macbeth in the account of Holinshed, which the poet imitated. The historian tells us that when this announcement occurred,

Makbeth was sore troubled herewith, revolving the thing in his mind, for - as he took the matter - Dunoane did what in him lay to defraud him; and then he began to take counsel how he might usurpe the kingdome by force.22

21 Ibid., I, iv, 38, 39.
22 Holinshed, in Furness, 387.
Until now there was no need to consider sinful means to fulfill his passion, indeed he conceives such an idea as fantastical: "My thought whose murder yet is but fantastical." But now he takes another natural stride toward sin, he reaches a deliberate conclusion that he will secure that crown by false means if necessary:

...that is a step
On which I must fall down, or else o'erleap,
For in my way it lies.

How the protagonist has developed and changed! How that potential passion of ambition has moved from its innocent state, and is now darkened by the aspects of sinfulness; it is being actuated more and more as imitation of nature's transit from potency to act demands.

Immediately the conflict in his soul recurs; his conscience chides him in the vivid imagery of stars, eyes, and hands.

Stars hide your fires;
Let not light see my black and deep desires.

It is most natural that conscience should speak up after this first sinful decision of Macbeth. This part is due his soul, is proportioned.

The next step in the rising action occurs when Duncan, in the very same speech in which he announces his appointment of

23 Shakespeare, Macbeth, I, iii, 139.
24 Ibid., I, iv, 48 - 50.
25 Ibid., I, iv, 50, 51.
Malcolm as his successor, declares that he will pay a visit to Macbeth's castle: "From hence to Inverness!"26 Unsuspecting Duncan having just given Macbeth the motive for killing him, now provides him with the perfect opportunity for committing the sin. This step is utterly indispensable in the plot, and hence pertains to the completeness required by integrity. How naturally the plot has progressed; the motives have been building up and now the opportunity is presented. The causal, logical sequence required by proportion and integral unity is evidenced clearly.

It is now time for Lady Macbeth to make her appearance upon the stage, reading her husband's letter. Her opening words reveal at once her nature and her role in the play:

Yet do I fear they nature
Is too full o' the milk of human kindness
To catch the nearest way...

Hie thee hither
That I may pour my spirits in thine ear,
And chastise with the valour of my tongue
All that impedes thee from the golden round.27

Lady Macbeth is to be the strongest motive, the most influential cause driving Macbeth to the climax. That is her self-appointed task in this fiction, just as it was the aim of the historical Queen Macbeth, as Holinshed narrates:

The woords of the three weird sisters...
greatly encouraged him hereunto, but

26 Ibid.: I, iv, 42.
27 Ibid.: I, v, 12 - 14; 22 - 25.
specially his wife lay sore upon him to attempt the thing, as she was verie ambitious, burning in unquenchable desire to beare the name of queen.28

The influence of Lady Macbeth on her spouse is so well brought out by the pleasant analogy of Quiller-Couch that we may quote it:

May I, without undue levity, illustrate her clearness of purpose by this comparison:

'Dearest Emma (wrote a young lady), you will congratulate me when I tell you that Papa has this morning been offered the Bishopric of __________. It was quite unexpected. He is even now in the library, asking for guidance. Dear Mamma is upstairs, packing.' 29

Perhaps the most forceful, and certainly a very natural, true-to-life cause of temptation and sin is an evil companion urging one to do the deed. So Lady Macbeth is definitely a duly proportioned part of the play, and her function adds another stimulus to the progressing action, advancing it toward the climax and eventual catastrophe. She pertains to the completeness and the unity demanded by integrity.

But especially is Lady Macbeth an instance of splendor formae. She, more than all the other causes, drives Macbeth to the

28 Holinshed, in Furness, 387.
sin with such a force that her influence strikingly shines out. One cannot fully appreciate the brilliance of this artistic personality unless he sees the part portrayed on the stage by someone like Judith Anderson, unless he actually hears a woman speak such lines as:

Come you spirits
That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here;
And fill me from the crown to the toe topful
Of direst cruelty!

Come to my woman's breasts
And take my milk for gall, you murdering ministers...
I would, while it was smiling in my face,
Have pluck'd my nipple from his boneless gums,
And dashed the brains out, had I so sworn as you
Have done to this.30

Such lines in the mouth of a woman! A woman with a passion as fierce as that is indeed a stirring representation of ambition, and of the influence of an evil companion. Yet Lady Macbeth is no fiend or shrew. The vast majority of critics and actresses picture her as having many of the softening qualities of womanhood. She is Macbeth's "dearest partner," and even after the murder his "dearest chuck;" and she addresses him "Gentle my lord," when not aroused by her ambition. "Her feminine grace like some unexpected minor chord or passage in one of Beethoven's grand symphonies will steal on the ear,

heard amid the magnificent crash of harmony..."31 This womanly tenderness makes her all the more powerful an influence on her spouse, so that Blackmore can say: "Macbeth would probably have conquered his temptation had he not encountered Lady Macbeth."32 And J.F. Kirke can summarize:

Here [in this play] is essentially the same situation, with the same natural and supernatural agencies [as in the Fall of Eden]. In both there is the violation of the divine command - Ye shall not eat - Ye shall not kill; in both there is the tempter seeking to defeat the will of the Almighty - the subtle serpent, the witches, or the power they serve; in both there is the delusive assurance, keeping the word of promise to the ear, and breaking it to the hope; in both there are the husband and the wife, the woman the bolder of the two, not only an accomplice, but an instigator of the deed.33

Nothing better than this comparison illustrates the naturalness, the true imitation of life in this tragedy.

Now that Lady Macbeth has joined her influence to all the other motives driving Macbeth to the murder of Duncan, now that she counsels him to

Look like the innocent flower
But be the serpent under 't...and put
This night's great business into my dispatch.34

32 Blackmore, 115.
33 J.F. Kirke, Atlantic Monthly, Apr., 1895, in Furness, 411.
34 Shakespeare, Macbeth, I, v, 61 - 65.
the rising action is complete,—except for one more vital factor in a man’s fall into sin.

This final factor is the sinner’s concentration on temporal, earthly prosperity and correlative disregard for the life after death. This forgetfulness of the next life is the fundamental cause of sin, for sin is the preferring of some forbidden temporal good to eternal bliss. This fault of worldliness Macbeth has, as is evidenced by his soliloquy in the final scene of Act One:

If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well
It were done quickly. If th' 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, that we but teach
Bloody instructions, which, being taught, return
To plague th' inventor. This even-handed justice
Commends th' ingredients of our poison'd chalice
To our own lips. 35

Here he confesses that he is perfectly willing to commit the murder if he can 'get away with it' on earth; if he can be sure that others will not attempt the same crime on him, then he

35 Shakespeare, Macbeth, I, vii, 1 - 12.
is willing to "jump," to risk, to skip, to ignore "the life to come." One critic says that in this soliloquy Shakespeare has given us "a momentous point toward forming a due estimate of our hero." That critic is correct; this lack of due religious fear of God, this total absorption in temporal success, is, in the last analysis, the deepest cause of sin. Hence, in this tragedy Shakespeare has been most profoundly true to reality, has most intimately imitated life. He has created a full, true, vivid picture of an ambitious man; he has written a play with integrity, proportion, and splendor of form.

Act One closes amid violent volitional conflict. Macbeth's conscience, reminding him of his duty to the virtuous Duncan as his host, his kinsman, his subject, has dissuaded him from the crime.

I have no spur
To prick the sides of my intent, but only
Vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itself
And falls on th' other.  

Immediately he announces to Lady Macbeth this decision of his will: "We will proceed no further in this business." In a flash Lady Macbeth sees that their opportunity is about to be lost and she makes one, almost hysterical, effort to sway him.

38 Ibid., I, vii, 31.
She assails him where he is most vulnerable, she rouses him with the two most natural motives for her to use on such a personality as Macbeth - again a fine exemplification of formal proportion. She calls this brave soldier a coward: "Would'st thou live a coward in thine own esteem?"39 And she appeals to his strong love for her: "From this time such shall I account thy love!"40 She gives an extraordinary demonstration of her own boldness: "We fail! Who dares receive it other!"41 Poor Macbeth's resolution falters; her passionate courage sweeps him off his feet. His decision is taken in a moment of enthusiasm - the natural surge of passion in a man resolving on sin, hence a duly proportioned part. He cries, "Bring forth men children only! I am settled, and bent upon each corporal agent to this terrible feat."42 "I am settled!" Macbeth's conscience has lost its fight, the hero's ambition has won, the rising action is over and the stage is set for the climax.

It will be well here to list the steps, the causes, toward the murder, noticing how naturally they follow one another and how they drive toward the one goal. Since this is rising action the chart is read from bottom to top:

39 Ibid., I, vii, 42.
40 Ibid., I, vii, 39.
41 Ibid., I, vii, 59, 77.
42 Ibid., I, vii, 79, 80.
Murder of Duncan

(10) - Worldliness; neglect of life to come.

(9) - Lady Macbeth; companion in sin.

(8) - Duncan visits Inverness; the opportunity.

(7) - Appointment of Malcolm; the motive.

(6) - Appointment as Thane of Cawdor immediately following witches' prophecy of same; inciting circumstance.

(5) - Weird Sisters; diabolic temptation.

(4) - Macbeth's military success and fame; inciting circumstance.

(3) - Macbeth assumes command of country's forces; occasion of inciting passion.

(2) - Duncan's inadequacies; inciting circumstance.

(1) - Macbeth's character: (a) predominant passion of Ambition.
      (b) genius for leadership.

The naturalness or due proportion of these steps has been repeatedly pointed out. They are all true to life, and Macbeth reacted to each one in a way normal to a man with a character or a soul such as his. He has a passion of ambition, and to each circumstance, to each temptation, he reacts as an ambitious man; he grows in his passion. Thus he acts proportionately or naturally, and because these different details of the play are all natural causes of sin, they each are proportionate. The unity amid the variety of these details or causes is evident; they all drive Macbeth toward the sin. The completeness is
perhaps the most remarkable; no detail of a sinner's fall is omitted; they are all portrayed: the passion, the motive, the opportunity, the occasion, the temptations, the sinful companion, the worldliness—all are here, giving this play admirable integral completeness. The hero clearly changes under these circumstances; his potential ambition grows, thus imitating nature's transit from potency to act. Finally, this proper arrangement of sufficient details works towards the clear presentation of the theme-form: ambition. Certainly the introduction and rising action comply with Aristotelian-Thomistic aesthetics. But the story of ambition is incomplete without showing that the "wages of sin is death," without the falling action.
CHAPTER VIII

APPLICATION OF THE FOUR CANONS TO THE CLIMAX, FALLING ACTION, CATASTROPHE, AND CONCLUSION OF MACBETH

Macbeth has now arrived at the crucial moment in his life, and this is the point of most intense interest in the drama, the climax. In this final chapter of the thesis will be shown the hero passing this turning point in his life and descending to his destruction.

As it was the function of Act One to present the series of temptations and incitements, and the growth of passion in Macbeth, so it is the single task of Act Two to depict his sin. Act Two contains the climax. By this singleness of purpose in the various acts Shakespeare has achieved unity of impression within these parts themselves of the play.

In the climax of this tragedy the poet pulls back the veil and allows the audience to gaze into the depths of a soul in the very act of committing a mortal sin. To enhance the clarity of the awfulness of this act Shakespeare places it in a most proportionate setting. The act starts with Banquo's comment on the darkness of the night:
There's husbandry in heaven;  
Their candles are all out.¹

An owl shriek'd,² strange knockings were heard, violent winds blew and "chimneys were blown down,"³ "the earth was feverous and did shake;"⁴ and when that night of horror is over, morning refuses to dawn and all remains cloudy and dreary:

...by the clock 'tis day,  
And yet dark night strangles the travelling lamp.  
Is't night's predominance, or the day's shame  
That darkness does the face of earth entomb,  
When living light should kiss it?⁵

Against such an ominous backdrop this act takes place.  
Again, the application of the canons is almost self-evident.  
Integrity and proportion - this setting completes the picture of horror and works mightily toward creating that effect, so that it contributes to the integral richness and splendor formae by making vivid the direness of the sin of the ambitious man.

The devil is surely present when a man is on the brink of sin, goading him on; this fact of the spiritual life Shakespeare represents concretely by the dagger appearing in mid-air before Macbeth. This so strongly impels him to the sin that he cries

¹ Shakespeare, Macbeth, II, i, 4, 5.  
² Ibid., II, ii, 3.  
³ Ibid., II, iii, 39.  
⁴ Ibid., II, iii, 43.  
⁵ Ibid., II, iv, 6 - 10.
out: "Thou marshall'st me the way that I was going." Then his passion runs wild and vivid imagery races through his mind:

Now o'er the one half world
Nature seems dead, and wicked dreams abuse
The curtain'd sleep.

The wolf
Whose howl's his watch
Moves like a ghost...

How true to life, how proportionate therefore, is such a frenzy of passion immediately before a mortal sin.

"I go and it is done!" With plain words showing a deliberate will Macbeth commits his first mortal sin of ambition. In the very act of sinning itself the hoped-for exhilaration is absent, and there is only mental torment, as Macbeth exclaims, "Who's there? What ho!" In one tremulous line the poet has captured the disturbance in the sinner's soul. As imitation and splendor of form demand there is here a perfect picture of the ambitious soul acting ambitiously. As the other two canons demand, this detail of the play greatly and naturally contributes to this picture.

Macbeth begins immediately the decline which will culminate only in his total ruin. He feels the natural remorse the moment

---

6 Ibid., II, i, 42.
7 Ibid., II, i, 49 - 56.
8 Ibid., II, i, 62.
9 Ibid., II, ii, 8.
after his sin. "I am afraid to think what I have done!" His better nature so tortures him that he feels forsaken by God and a trifling matter assumes, in the heat of the moment, great religious significance:

But when they did say 'God bless us'
wherefore could not I pronounce 'Amen'?
I had most need of blessing, and 'Amen'
Stuck in my throat.

He is horrified at his sin:

This is a sorry sight
Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood
Clean from my hand?

He feels that so natural wish that he had not done it:

Wake Duncan with thy knocking,
I would thou couldst!

Well can Blackmore write:

After the murder Macbeth becomes, like all unhardened criminals, a prey to the stings of conscience, whose moral principles now begin to react on him. While the evil tempters roused his keen ambition...his mind...disregarded these moral principles, ...; but in the inevitable reaction, these immutable and eternal moral principles return in violence to accuse and condemn him. Now he sees that crime is a two-faced figure, which, clothed with meretricious smiles and fascination before the fatal step, reveals after it her horrid countenance...

10 Ibid., II, ii, 51.
11 Ibid., II, ii, 29 - 33.
12 Ibid., II, ii, 20; 60.
13 Ibid., II, ii, 74, 75.
14 Blackmore, 144.
The next point in the falling action is a small but significant one: it is the ever-present little "slip-up" in an otherwise "perfect crime." One has to hear Lady Macbeth scream in anger at Macbeth, "Why did you bring these daggers from the place?"\textsuperscript{15} to get the full import of this blunder. Macbeth, the man of action, is beginning to be less efficient and acute. Now he must return to the scene of his sin, and there he loses his composure and errs badly once more; he murders the grooms out of fear that they will wake and prove their innocence.\textsuperscript{16} His wild explanation of these murders draws the attention of all the assembled lords upon himself, and Lady Macbeth reads the doubts in their eyes and faints out of anxiety lest he betray the whole thing. The last lines of Act Two and the first lines of Act Three show that Banquo, Macduff, Ross and the other lords are now suspicious of Macbeth:

\begin{quote}
Thou hast it now: king, Cawdor, Glamis, all,
As the weird women promis'd, and I fear
Thou play'dst most fouilly for 't.\textsuperscript{17}
\end{quote}

Already some of the lords have repaired to England to seek supplies and allies in order to overthrow Macbeth. And the man who is to help them is the saintly Edward the Confessor of

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{15} Shakespeare, \textit{Macbeth}, II, ii, 48.
\textsuperscript{17} Shakespeare, \textit{Macbeth}, III, i, 1 - 3.
\end{footnotes}
England, who heals his subjects by the imposition of his hands. By thus having a saint overcome the sinner Shakespeare again enhances the guilt of Macbeth by means of contrast, an item of the play's structural proportion. Another contrast is the reversal of roles of Macbeth and his wife in the falling action. She was the chief instigator of action before; now she is in the background. He was the hesitant one; now he is the one who schemes to ward off the collapse. This contrast is very neatly interwoven in the play giving it remarkable structural balance and proportion.

The external conflict is under way; the more Macbeth will fight against it, the stronger the opposition to him will become.

Before proceeding down that final stretch, it will be necessary to pause and apply the canons to that disputed scene: the knocking at the gate. The interpretation of Thomas De Quincey will be adopted.

De Quincey calls this a superb example of power through restraint or relief; hence it pertains to the structural proportion of the play. Aside from the extrinsic fact that it was inserted as a sop to the groundlings in the Pit, this episode is intrinsically connected with the development of the tragedy. Its purpose is to heighten the awfulness of the murder scene
which has just gone before by giving the audience a complete relief and contrast immediately after it.

De Quincey will have us imagine as a parallel a huge crowd standing completely hushed, in absolute silence, as "some national hero is carried by in funeral pomp." The life of the crowd is suspended by the solemnity of the occasion. The procession passes and moves on, but the hush remains, until it is rudely shattered by the noise of some rattling wagon bouncing along over the cobblestones. Then "the goings-on of human life are suddenly resumed," and it is only then that people turn to one another and realize how silent they had been.

So in Macbeth something tremendous has just happened. Not the death of Duncan, says De Quincey, but the sin of Macbeth. "We must be made to feel that the human nature of Macbeth - the divine nature of Love (and Grace) - is gone...and that the fiendish nature has taken its place." What has happened is of eternal proportions; therefore time must stand still. "The murder must be isolated - cut off by an immeasurable gulf from the ordinary tide and succession of human affairs;...time must be annihilated; relation to things without abolished." In order to bring out the awful hush of the murder scene, the poet intro-

18 Thomas De Quincey, Miscellaneous Essays, "On the Knocking at the Gate in Macbeth," Boston, 1851, in Furness, 138, 139.
duces an abrupt reaction. "The effect [of the porter scene] is that it reflects back upon the murder a peculiar awfulness and a depth of solemnity; [for with it] the pulses of ordinary life are beginning to beat again; and the re-establishment of the goings-on of the world in which we live first makes us profoundly sensible of the awful parenthesis that had suspended them."
The Shakespearean audience, as it were, begins to breathe again after the murder scene; and then they realize how terrible it had been. In no better way could the artist have relieved the tension of that scene, and at the same time enhanced it. Consequently this scene does not violate integrity; rather it increases the splendor or vividness of the theme-form: sinful ambition.

Acts Three, Four, and Five follow, and it will be well to chart the falling action just as the rising action was charted:
The decline of the unrepenting sinner is swift. Macbeth's collapse can be summarized in the foregoing nine steps. However there are four major aspects in his fall. First, in regard to his own soul: in a vain attempt to strengthen the weak points in his position as king, he commits more and worse sins and becomes a hardened sinner. Here is shown perfectly the
potential ambition advanced to its full stage of actuality as imitation demands. Secondly, in regard to the chief object of his ambition, the crown: he thought that in being king he would find perfect happiness, but now he is disillusioned. Again ambition is shown in its true light. As Bradley says,

His evil tempters had inflamed his criminal ambition by picturing the kingship as synonymous with power and happiness; but to his surprise and chagrin the crown seems to have turned to nothing in his grasp. Though his ruling passion has been gratified by the possession of his one supreme ambition, he experiences naught but unhappiness in the fears and anxieties that 'Put rancours in the vessel of his peace, and that shake us nightly.'

Thirdly, in regard to his fellowmen: he loses the esteem and love they once bore him and is abandoned to bitter isolation. As Furnivall says, "From now on the play shows the separation from man as well as God, the miserable trustless isolation, that sin brings in its train." This is again a most duly proportioned and integral effect of his sin. Fourthly, in regard to the devil: Satan, the betrayer, leads his victim to ruin and then scoffs at him, and Macbeth sees that he is but "the fiend that lies like truth." Hence just as all the causes of sin were present in the rising action, so all the effects of a

19 Bradley, 170; Shakespeare, Macbeth, III, 1, 64.
20 Furnivall, in Furness, 412
21 Shakespeare, Macbeth, V, v, 44.
mortal sin of ambition are depicted in the falling action; and both causes and effects drive eloquently toward the catastrophe, giving this drama the completeness, the unity, and the fullness of integrity. These steps in the downfall are all successively logical actions on the part of the other men, giving the play the due proportion of plot. The other lords react quite normally against the tyrant. The steps of the plot in Macbeth are the natural changes in an ambitious soul surrendering itself to that passion; the hero sinks lower and lower morally. Thus the play has due formal proportion of the actions of the hero to his whole soul. The ruin on all accounts is as devastating as it can be. Macbeth becomes a cruel criminal morally, and physically he meets death after politically suffering defeat. The realm is in a state of turmoil and terror. Such perfection in the presentation of the idea ambition certainly is a clear presentation of this idea, with a brilliance that cannot be missed, hence the splendor of the form: ambition.

Each of these four aspects will now be briefly verified in an analysis of the final three acts. Act Three particularly shows the necessary unrest and disappointment in the sinner's soul, and the need of further crimes to "cover up." Macbeth complains of the remorse of conscience he feels; he has
Put rancours in the vessel of my peace;
And mine eternal jewel [his soul] Given to the common enemy of man.22

He knows what he has done to his soul and eternal life. His kingship on earth however has not even brought him the complete happiness he expected it surely would.

Upon my head they plac'd a fruitless crown,
And put a barren sceptre in my gripe.23

How natural that he should find no satisfaction in sinfully gotten honors.

Because

Our fears in Banquo Stick deep; and in his royalty of nature,24 he commits another fully deliberate murder. His decision to kill Banquo is made in words equally as clear as those when he killed Duncan. Then he said, "It is done;" now he says, "It is concluded." These are cold decisions of the will. Just as his passion surged on the brink of Duncan's murder, so now his passionate mind runs wild with vivid imagery

...ere the bat hath flown
His cloister'd flight; ere to black
Hecate's summons
The shard-borne beetle with his drowsy hums
Hath rung night's yawning peal, there shall be done
A deed of dreadful note.

22 Ibid., III, i, 66 - 68.
23 Ibid., III, i, 60, 61.
24 Ibid., III, i, 48, 49.
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! Light thickens, and
the crow
Makes wing to th' rocky wood:
Good things of day begin to droop and
drowse,
While night's black agents to their preys
do rouse.25

The critic Horn notes26 that the murder of Banquo is given
much less prominence than that of Duncan, because it is less
important in the character-development of the hero; this again
illustrates the proper emphasis the poet puts on the parts of
the play as structural proportion demands.

But Fleance escapes; the external conflict marches on;
Macbeth is left with his fears:

Fleance is scap'd.
Then comes my fit again: I had else
been perfect;...
But now I am cabin'd, cribb'd, confin'd,
bound in
To saucy doubts and fears.27

Next Banquo's ghost returns, because Satan's aim is not the
crown for Macbeth but his utter ruin; hence he probably sends
some fiend in the guise of Banquo. Satan intends this appari-
tion so to unnerve Macbeth in front of the other lords that

25 Ibid., III, ii, 40 - 44; 46 - 53.
26 F. Horn, Shakespeare's Schauspiele Erläutert, Leipzig, 1893, in Furness, 205.
27 Shakespeare, Macbeth, III, iv, 20, 21, 24, 25.
their suspicions are further aroused and confirmed. Scene Six of Act Three shows us this is the result of that banquet on the lords. Hence Satan leads his victim to his political and physical ruin. To lead him to moral ruin Satan has this apparition so unbalance Macbeth that he feels repentance is impossible and that the only road to security is by means of more sin. This is how Macbeth indeed follows the promptings of Satan for as the banquet scene closes he says,

I am in blood
Steeped in so far that, should I wade no more,
Returning were as tedious as go o'er.28

In Act Four Macbeth indeed does "go o'er," for in this act is depicted his utter moral collapse. Macbeth no longer needs to be tempted, now he will seek out the Weird Sisters by himself.

I will tomorrow
...to the Weird Sisters
...for I am bent to know
By the worst means, the worst. For my own good
All causes must give way.
Things bad make strong themselves
by ill.29

And Satan will lead him to the worst indeed, for it now takes only a word, "Beware Macduff!"30 and Macbeth instantly

28 Ibid., III, v, 136 - 138.
29 Ibid., III, iv, 123 - 136; III, ii, 55.
30 Ibid., IV, i, 71.
resolves on his blackest sin, to "give to the edge o' the sword
his wife, his babes...!"31

The majority of critics severely censure those producers
who omit this scene of the murder of Lady Macduff and her
child as being too horrible. They say that Shakespeare intended
it to be the zenith of horror and cruelty, because he wished to
impress upon his audience the deepest depth to which passion and
sin can drive a man. Hence he shows Macbeth on the slightest of
motives brutally murdering a mother and her child, who by their
tender innocence greatly solicit sympathy. He would have the
audience feel sharply the degradation of Macbeth.

One can clearly and forcefully see now the nature of this
passion of ambition, this form shines out in terrible radiance
in its fullest detail and perfection.

Moreover, this murder is an essential causal link in the
outward plot also, as it provides the reason for Macduff's
special hatred of Macbeth, and thus adds power and intensity to
the final struggle.

With the commission of this sin, as Bradley well says, "the
ruin of the hero is complete."32 In him now all passions run

---

31 Ibid., IV, i, 151, 152.
32 Bradley, 363.
rampant:

I grant him bloody,
Luxurious, avaricious, false, deceitful,
Sudden, ambitious~smacking of every sin
That has a name.33

Who does not hear an echo of the Spiritual Exercises of Loyola: 
"...and from one dominating sin, the devil leads his victim into all manner of sins."34 Macbeth has certainly changed, and that most naturally according to ascetical laws.

As the great soul of Macbeth is now in ruin, the poet, to achieve the magnitude demanded by tragedy and the brilliance required by splendor formae, also reflects this complete wreck in the external action, the plot; with the fall of the king, the whole country is ruined:

Each new morn
New widows howl, new orphans cry, new sorrows
Strike heaven on the face.
I think our country sinks beneath the yoke;
It weeps, it bleeds, and each new day a gash
Is added to her wounds.35

Proportion and integrity are also here perfectly satisfied by the normality, the completeness, the unity of result, and the fullness of the effects of Macbeth's passion on others as well as on himself.

33 Shakespeare, Macbeth, IV, iii, 55 - 60.
35 Shakespeare, Macbeth, IV, 1, 4 - 6; 39 - 41.
There remains only the fifth and final act in the fall of Macbeth; there remains his final isolation and despair culminating in his death. His crown has brought him no glory but only the hate and fear of all men. He bewails this loss of the honor due the king:

I have lived long enough; my way 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-honor, breath,
Which the poor heart would fain deny, and dare not.  

All his friends who formerly hailed him "worthy thane," "noble sir," and "loved him well," now curse him as "this tyrant," "not in horrid hell can come a devil more damn'd in evils to top Macbeth." 37 How natural that good men should shun this sinner. This development is duly proportioned to all that has preceded it.

Nor is he consoled even by his "dearest partner" in sin. Lady Macbeth has broken under the disillusionment of her hopes. Now she is no support to her consort. She has but eighteen lines in the last two acts, and all of these are delirious mutterings in her sleep. The passion of ambition, yielded to, has changed, has ruined, that strong woman. Her ruin is complete.

36 Ibid., V, iii, 22 - 28.
37 Ibid., IV, iii, 55 - 57.
and quite natural in one of the weaker sex; and mental derangement and suicide are vivid details to show the results of the form ambition with force and clarity.

When his once dearly loved wife kills herself, Macbeth is by now so calloused he can only growl, "She had to die sometime anyway!"

She would have died hereafter; There would have been a time for such a word. 38

So far can a sinful passion dry up the tenderness in the human heart. And he sinks into bitterness, cynicism, and despair:

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.
I 'gin to be a-weary of the sun
And wish this estate of the world were now undone. 39

Macbeth's soul has been ruined by his passion; his kingship and his friends are only sources of trouble and anguish

38 Ibid., V, v, 17, 18.
39 Ibid., V, v, 19 - 28; 49, 50.
now; he has nothing left to cling to but the diabolic promises 
of the witches:

None of woman born shall harm Macbeth.

Macbeth shall never vanquished be until 
Great Burnam Wood to high Dunsinane Hill
Shall come against him.\textsuperscript{40}

But this last plank is snatched from his drowning grasp as 
the messenger and Macduff announce:

I looked toward Burnam, and anon, methought
The wood began to move.

Macduff was from his mother's womb
Untimely ripped!\textsuperscript{41}

At this the very last shred of noble manhood falls from his 
character. That which was his strongest and most prided virtue, 
his courage, vanishes. The brave man of action, who once 
boasted that "I dare do all that may become a man!"\textsuperscript{42} now weak-
ly admits that he has changed to a craven and is afraid to 
fight:

Accursed be that tongue that tells me so,
For it hath cow'd my better part of man;
I'll not fight with thee!\textsuperscript{43}

Yet, as Macduff taunts him with his cowardice, "Then yield, 
ye coward!"\textsuperscript{44} Macbeth flies into a blinding rage and cursing,

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., IV, i, 80; 92 - 94.
\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., V, v, 34, 35; V, viii, 15, 16.
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid., I, vii, 46.
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., V, viii, 17 - 22.
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., V, viii, 23.
"And damn'd be him that first cries, 'Hold, enough!'"45 dies, as he lived, a victim of uncontrolled passion.

Thus the end of the tragedy is linked with its beginning. Macbeth was striding toward his death and damnation from the moment he first neglected to check his passion. Herein lies the dramatic unity. There were certainly sufficient causes in the rising action to lead him to the sin, and total effects of that sin in the falling action; thus the play has completeness. By an analysis of Macbeth's soul as the play progressed it has been shown that each step he took was eminently true-to-life. By demonstrating the naturalness of the character-development and the plot, it has been shown that this play definitely adheres to the canon of debita proportio. As Macbeth always acted normally for a man so tainted with ambition, his actions therefore are always duly proportioned to the soul, giving the play due formal proportion of the parts to the whole. Since each step follows the preceding ones logically, the drama has due proportion of the parts among themselves. Temptation, an evil companion, a passion, etc., all naturally lead to sin; in the same way disillusionment, isolation, further sin and eternal ruin follow sin and passion. The sinfully ambitious man is shown. Thus this work of art reveals the form of ambition, manifests this reality with a radiance, reduces this imperfect

45 Ibid., V, viii, 34.
act to its perfect, idealized state; the play has splendor of form.

Thus the intellects and the imaginations of the spectators and the art critics can be said to be more than satisfied. So too have their emotions. For a work of art is neither complete nor splendid unless it appeals to the heart as well as to the mind. In tragic art this means a catharsis of the emotions of pity and fear.⁴⁶ These emotions are aroused in the audience because in a tragedy they meet a man who was good, who had potentialities for becoming really great, but they see that man carry himself to ruin because he makes some colossal error of judgment.

The tragic hero is a man of noble nature, like ourselves in elemental feelings and emotions; idealized indeed, but with so large a share of our common humanity as to enlist our eager interest and sympathy: He falls from a position of lofty eminence; and the disaster that wrecks his life may be traced not to deliberate wickedness, but to some great error of frailty.⁴⁷

It is of utmost importance to notice that the sympathy of the audience is with the individual hero precisely because he is an idealized example of human nature. While watching him they

---

can well say, "There but for the grace of God go I!" Pity and fear accompany the intense realization that human nature is indeed so weak, that men, capable of much greatness, can in actuality fall so low. Each spectator has felt the pull of passion, the whispers of Satan in his own soul, and hence he follows his own biography in the play, without, however, explicitly adverting to it, for in this lies the genius of the dramatist.

In the tragic hero the spectator quits the narrow sphere of the individual. He identifies himself with the fate of mankind.\(^{48}\)

The tragic hero is a man like ourselves, and on this inner likeness the effect of tragedy mainly hinges. So much human nature must there be in him that we are able in some sense to identify ourselves with him, to make his misfortune our own.\(^{49}\)

Pity and fear awakened in connexion with these larger aspects of human suffering, and kept in close alliance with one another, become universalized emotions.\(^{50}\)

So in Macbeth. He was a good man; he had the ability to become a great man, but he went down to ruin because he yielded to the flaw in his character, ambition, and because he made a fatal error of judgment. It is quite true that Macbeth's ambitious murders were deliberate vices; so was Othello's jealous

---

48 Ibid., 266.
49 Ibid., 260.
50 Ibid., 266.
murder of Desdemona, so was Oedipus' stubbornness, so was Hamlet's revenge. In so far as these heroes receive the just punishment of their sins, the audience cannot pity them, although they can fear for the impending doom. But the proper emotions of pity and fear are aroused at the sight of a noble nature, capable of far better things, committing the fatal error of indulging in vice and thus destroying itself. Following deliberately an evil course of action is the very worst mistake any man can make, and the audience watches him being betrayed into such a course of action because of some error of judgment.

The mistake Macbeth makes is twofold; not only does he trust Satan, but he also judges incorrectly the true nature of sin. He allows the prophecies of the Weird Sisters to urge him to sin. He builds up false hope in their assurances that he is safe until the apparently impossible happens; until Burnam Wood should come to Dunsinane and there should live a man not born of woman. He relies on these promises and this is a mistake he learns to rue too late. But his second error is more profound. Blackmore and Quiller-Couch maintain that the error in Macbeth is the hero's misjudgment of the nature of sin. He is deluded by the devil, by his wife, and by his passion, into believing and hoping that sinful means will bring him happiness.
After the murder...Macbeth sees that crime is a two faced figure, which, clothed with meretricious smiles and fascination before the fatal step, reveals after it her horrid countenance.51

This is the most natural of all mistakes, every sinner makes it, so that in watching Macbeth make this common and fatal error "we in some sense identify ourselves with him," we recognize this fundamental weakness in human nature. As Quiller-Couch so well says:

How could Shakespeare make his audience feel pity and fear...? There is only one possible way. It is to make our hero...proceed to his crime under some fatal hallucination... The hallucination, the fatal mistake, must be one that can seize on a mind yet powerful and lead it logically to a doom that we, seated in the audience, understand, awfully forebode, yet cannot arrest...Now, of all the forms of human error, which is the most fatal? Surely that of exchanging Moral Order, Righteousness, the Will of God (call it what you will) for something directly opposed to it; in other words, of assigning the soul to Satan's terrible resolve, 'Evil, be thou my good.' And Macbeth made the error of thinking that through evil he could get his good; thus he made evil his good.52

This perversion of the moral order the Weird Sisters announce from the start: "Fair is foul, and foul is fair!"

51 Blackmore, 144.
52 Arthur Quiller-Couch, 19, 20.
Thus this art-work has emotional integrity also, and in this emotional power lies its most vivid splendor formae; not only does the audience see an ambitious man, they live with him. Because the intellectual form has been idealized, so too its corresponding emotion has been universalized, and can be participated in by all men, for all men are human.

Having thus with a magnificent artistic production aroused and purged the emotions of the audience, Shakespeare, in accord with the correct structural proportion of dramatic art, closes the play with a calm idyllic ending. Malcolm is crowned king; peace is restored to the realm. As Butcher says, "...through the ruin of the hero the disturbed order of the world is restored and moral forces re-assert their sway."53 As Malcolm turns to the audience and says:

So, thanks to all at once, and to each one Whom we invite to see us crowned at Scone.54

the ending is in the words of Fletcher, "like a gleam of evening sunshine bidding sweet farewell after so fair and foul a day."55

The curtain is rung down upon a piece of art which has been "pleasing to behold" because with integrity and due proportion

53 Butcher, 311.
54 Shakespeare, Macbeth, V, viii, 74, 75.
55 Fletcher, in Furness, 347.
it has achieved the splendor of the form, ambition. Thus this thesis has demonstrated that the aesthetic principles of the man from Aquin can be minutely verified in the art of the man from Avon.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

Aquinas, Thomas, *Commentaria in Librum Dionysii De Divinis Nominibus*, *Opera Omnia*, Parmae, Tipis Petri Fiaccadori, 1858, VII.

---------------, *Commentaria in X Libros Ethicorum ad Nichomachum*, Lib. VI., *Opera Omnia*, Parmae, Tipis Petri Fiaccadori, 1854, XXI.

---------------, *Commentaria in IV Libros Sententiarum Petri Lombardi*, In Lib. I., Parmae, Tipis Petri Fiaccadori, 1856, VI.

---------------, *Expositio in Aliquot Libros Veteris Testamenti*, In Psalmum XXV, *Opera Omnia*, Parmae, Tipis Petri Fiaccadori, 1863, XIV.

---------------, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Taurini, M.E. Marietti, 1937, 6 tom.


Augustine, *Omnia Opera*, Paris, Migne, 1877, XXXII, XXXIV.


Secondary Sources

Books


------------, *Shakespeare, His Life, Art and Characters*, Boston, Ginn and Co., 1872.

Joyce, James, *Stephen Hero, A Part of the First Draft of A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, ed. from the Ms. in Harvard College Libr. by Theodore Spencer, New York, Vail-Ballou Press Inc.


Rother, S. J., Aloysius, Beauty, St. Louis, Herder and Co., 1917.


Speckbaugh, Paul F., C. PPS., Some General Canons of Literary Criticism Determined from an Analysis of Art, Washington, D. C., Murray and Heister, 1936.


Periodicals


Hickey, E., "Catholic Principles and English Literature," Catholic World, V., #95, 145.


Parsons, S.J., W., "Philosophy of Literature," American Catholic Quarterly, V., 36, 434; V., 10, 719; V., 40, 1; V., 43, 685; V., 38, 719.

Pollon, S.J., A., "Art and Beauty," The Month, (July, 1865)


APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis submitted by William G. Topmoeller, S.J. has been read and approved by three members of the Department of English.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Jan. 31, 1941
Date

Res. John J. Conrath, S.J.
Signature of Adviser