# A STUDY OF SHAKESPEARE'S SOLILOQUIES IN HIS MAJOR TRAGEDIES : *HAMLET, OTHELLO, KING LEAR,* AND *MACBETH*



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# Contents


| | |
|---|---|
| Abstract | 5 |
| Preface | 6 |
| Introduction | 10 |
| Hamlet | 42 |
| Othello | 103 |
| King Lear | 149 |
| Macbeth | 189 |
| Conclusion | 253 |
| Bibliography | 267 |




## ABSTRACT

In the present thesis, entitled, "A Study of Shakespeare's Soliloquies in his Major Tragedies: *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear* and *Macbeth*," an attempt has been made to analyse the soliloquies in relation to their contextual perspectives. In doing so, the research has found out that the soliloquies in each of the plays concerned do not necessarily carry out a thematic continuity; that is, they are not interdependent on each other for the progression of the theme, they rather are, on most occasions, independent of each other. Each of the soliloquies is more integrally connected with the context of the scene in which it is taking place. The research has also evinced that all the major soliloquies are potentially a reservoir of ideological concerns which get ventilated by the soliloquisers both as their own immediate queries into the mystery of human existence in relation to society, nature and a divine order, and as questions having universal application. It is possible , therefore, as the research has shown, to infer an ideological pattern as working through the soliloquies, basing on which the thesis concludes that the soliloquies can be considered as a body of speeches that – through various strands and ramifications of thoughts - guide us to a clearly-held philosophy, which we have tried to define as 'the value of human life'. Ideologically, therefore, the soliloquies bear out a sustained development showing that they are not only interconnected in each play discussed here but also chronological having the issues broached in *Hamlet*, precisely concretised in the line, "To be or not to be," and turned further complicated - as the resolution to the dilemma between to-be or not-to-be seems to be a far cry, - in *Othello*, *King Lear*, and *Macbeth*, concretised again in such utterances as "Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow."

For our general lack of knowledge about the performance-aspect of the plays - both on stage and in films - we have largely avoided discussing the soliloquies from a thoroughly technical premise, and confined our discussion rather on their thematic concerns, adjusting, in the process, our views with those of the critics.

## Preface

Coming to write a thesis on Shakespeare's soliloquies in his four great tragedies, namely *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, and *Macbeth*, I must confess in all humbleness that it is a far more difficult job than I at first thought. My initial impulse for such an undertaking is related to a moment of my childhood when I first heard somebody in the family reciting the great soliloquy of Hamlet: 'To be or not to be that is the question.' Since that time I had read English Literature as a student and afterwards became a teacher in a university. As a university teacher, I had passed many many years without ever getting registered for a Ph. D. programme. Nor would I know on which area or author I shall decide to write my thesis. In the mean time, while Hamlet's 'to be or not to be' became the expression for my own procrastination about choosing the right topic for myself, it also proved to be the phrase that triggered an interest into me about Shakespeare in that happy epiphanical moment of my childhood. It grew large and large in my subconscious mind without my realising it, without my knowing that it was the obsession which would not allow me to work on anybody else but Shakespeare. But I would not ever dare to write a thesis on Shakespeare! The undertaking itself sounded so much impossible. Shakespeare has the all time largest critical work on him. And to work on him means to do a substantial amount of reading, for which I found myself, and still find, to be immensely unprepared. Then I thought, if I ever wrote a dissertation that must be on somebody whom I enjoyed reading the most. Then a colleague of mine from another department told me that while he was in a similar dilemma, the late Professor Abu Hena Mustafa Kamal had advised him that if he chose an author for his dissertation, he must choose a 'banyan tree', that is, a major author. Finding the clue to my problem in that piece of advice, I decided to pursue Shakespeare. But how to find the right motivation! How to find the necessary courage! So, some years ago when I went to Dhaka University Arts Faculty to meet a friend, he took me straight to Professor Serajul Islam Chowdhury, my erstwhile teacher, who patiently listened to my proposal and committed himself to act as my supervisor. I felt myself so fortunate that I feel that it is very important for a student to get a teacher like him. I do not have the language to express my regards for him, but I protest that

whatever is good in this thesis is due to his inspiring guidance, and whatever is poor is owing to my inability to follow his advice.

Each of Shakespeare's thirty-seven plays has soliloquies. Arnold[1] has roughly counted that there are about 399 occasions in which soliloquies are delivered, and the lines totalling are 5847. In the four plays concerned, namely *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, and *Macbeth*, soliloquies are spoken on 64 occasions in a total of 893 lines. That is, these four plays account for slightly over one-sixth the total soliloquized lines in Shakespeare. They are indicative of the prowess of Shakespeare, so much so that we undertake to analyse them in the future chapters.

We have mainly tried to treat the soliloquies serially as they appear in each play, and have discussed them in isolation, taking each soliloquy for a straight dissection. Quite often we have given literal paraphrases first, and then proceeded for the metaphorical meanings. One general assumption may be that any study of Shakespeare's soliloquies, in particular those we are going to study, will yield a unified theme in which some dominant concerns of the playwright are seen to have posed as problems of life, vindicated, say, in the soliloquies of earliest of the four tragedies, *Hamlet*, and then to have developed for fuller explication through the soliloquies of *Othello* and *Lear* until the solutions come in the later soliloquies, say, in those in *Macbeth*. The assumption is far from correct. Our study will show that no such linear theme has been developed. The soliloquies of each play have, if any, only a fragile thematic concern, and even less an ideological continuity. The soliloquies cannot be seen as tying up one with the other to carry out a theme or an ideological framework in isolation from the body of the text. Whatever theme or ideology a certain soliloquy evokes is related to the context in which it evolves rather than to the soliloquy which follows it. Thus the soliloquies show neither a linear thematic development, nor any dependency of one upon the other. In fact, if we try, we can enforce a pattern of thematic continuity on Hamlet's seven soliloquies, or on Iago's soliloquies, or on those of Macbeth, but that is true not because that the soliloquies

[1] Morris LeRoy Arnold, *The Soliloquies of Shakespeare: A study in technic* (The Columbia University Press, 1911), pp. 24-25.

are intended to be the agent of a thematic continuity, but because they are uttered by the same character whose inner problems the soliloquies are dealing with. For that matter actually, the two critics whose treatment of the soliloquies we have heavily relied upon in this thesis, namely Morris Leroy Arnold in his *The Soliloquies of Shakespeare* and Wolfgang Clemen in his *Shakespeare's Soliloquies*, have not tried either to discuss the soliloquies in terms of thematic continuity or ideological development. Arnold's study is basically a history of the evolution of the soliloquy from ancient period until the time of Shakespeare, with frequent glosses of many of the important soliloquies by Shakespeare and others in terms of various categories and kinds that the soliloquies are divided into. Since it is not Arnold's purpose that he will explicate the soliloquies individually, he therefore does not let out much insight into the reflective condition of the soliloquies, and hence the attempt to look for interpretations, in his work, in terms of thematic unity will be defeated. Clemen's study on the other hand is far more limited in scope and range than Arnold's, but, in a sense, it is fuller and more comprehensive as he analyses the soliloquized passages in relation to the characters, showing a causal pattern woven through their psychological motivation to the presentation of the soliloquized utterances. He traces the psychological pressure that impels a character to produce his soliloquy. He shows the appropriateness of the timing of a soliloquy. While Clemen chooses only a few soliloquies from each genre of Shakespeare's plays, he introduces each division with a general preface in which he elaborates on the stage-conditions as well as on the textual aspects that helped the growth of Shakespeare's soliloquy. Thus he defines both the generalized perspectives and the particularised situations for the enunciation of a soliloquy. Nevertheless, Clemen does not read the soliloquies as a sequence.

It would have been therefore natural for us to write our thesis on the soliloquies of Shakespeare's great tragedies from a technical point of view. That is to show how Shakespeare develops technically from the apprentice level in the earlier plays to the great height he achieves in the blank verse, say, in Hamlet's soliloquy, "To be or not to be that is the question." But that point again goes beyond the purview of our present thesis. Because to show the evolution of Shakespeare's mastery of the craft of poetic drama needs equal attention to all components of the play, and not only to the soliloquy.

Therefore we have not attempted to undertake a technical discussion of the soliloquy either.

What we have tried to do in the following chapters is to investigate into the nature of the soliloquies in their respective uniqueness. As each of Shakespeare's soliloquies in the plays concerned has a multi-faceted and multi-layered meaning, we have persisted in giving our judgment by taking all these layers into consideration. Though the soliloquies which we are going to discuss below do not have, as we have already explained, a unified thematic argument to enforce a single critical judgment from us, they form into a substantial body of reference of certain universal issues of existence, like justice, mercy, murder, jealousy and ambition, like sex and morality, and so on, that it appears that the soliloquies would be rightly judged if they were not taken as being particularly integrated with a particular thematic concern of a given play, but as being the outpourings on the issues mentioned above so that the readers (or audience) are enough provoked to start thinking about them. This has been the most fruitful outcome of our research into Shakespeare's soliloquies that we have been shaken enough into a fresh realisation about life and people. Thus, when viewed from such an angle Shakespeare's soliloquies do seem to provide us a good basis to form an idea about Shakespeare's way of looking at things, that is, his 'philosophy' (we utter this word with caution being fully aware of the danger of using such a word) of life. What is this philosophy about will be taken up for discussion, after we will have gone through the middle chapters - four in number, one for each play - in the final chapter of this thesis.

*A note on the footnote:*

The *MLA Stylesheet*, 1982 is followed.

# Introduction

**The Soliloquy as a Speech Convention**

The soliloquy was a convention of speech.[2] It was a popular speech-form used on the Elizabethan stage. The soliloquy was used in order to let a character (often a tragic hero) speak out his mind. The character would often clarify his intentions, unfold his passions to the audience through a soliloquy. The soliloquy was also a means of telling the audience about a villain's scheming. For example, Lorenzo in *The Spanish Tragedy* and Edmund in *King Lear* and, more importantly, Iago in *Othello* reveal their scheming nature through the soliloquy. But the true significance of the soliloquy lay in its being the mode of expression for great utterances like Hamlet's "To be or not to be". In a soliloquy the inside of the character was laid bare.

The word soliloquy derives from the Latin word *soliloquium* (*solus* + *loqui*), as coined by St. Augustine, meaning talking to oneself.[3] Thus, for a definition, we can say with Arnold that "When a character, during the course of the drama, is actually alone upon the stage and in his speech implies that he believes himself alone, then he is soliloquizing."[4] Even if others are present, a speech will constitute a soliloquy if the speaker is oblivious of the presence of others. Lear's speeches on the heath, for example, are soliloquies because he shows no awareness of his proximity to others while delivering them.[5]

The soliloquies, according to Arnold, can be classified as either verbal or mental. The verbal soliloquy is that when the soliloquizer talks to himself. The idea of this kind of soliloquy is to let the audience know what the soliloquizer is talking about to himself. On

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[2] M. C. Bradbrook, *Themes and Conventions of Elizabethan Tragedy* (Cambridge University Press, rpt. 1973), p. 4. She defines convention thus: "A convention may be defined as an agreement between writers and readers, whereby the artist is allowed to limit and simplify his material in order to secure greater concentration through a control of the distribution of emphasis. Conventions which are acknowledged have usually been erected into a system of Rules."

[3] Morris LeRoy Arnold, *The Soliloquies of Shakespeare: A study in Technic* (Columbia University Press, 1911), p. 2. Incidentally, this is the book I owe to heavily for the discussion of the technical aspects of the soliloquy in my thesis.

[4] Arnold, p.2.

[5] Arnold, pp. 4-5.

the other hand, the mental soliloquy involves the soliloquizer thinking to himself. He just thinks loudly. It is the portrayal of the speaker's thought. The mental soliloquy is not always intellectual, but emotional, and the actor never shows any knowledge of the audience, from which, according to Arnold, the verbal soliloquy may not be absolved.[6] The difference between these two kinds of soliloquies, however, is often difficult to determine.[7]

The soliloquy, category-wise, belongs to the direct speech.[8] Dialogues, monologues and asides are the other forms of direct speech. In a dialogue the characters participating are under the necessary requirements of suppressing and hiding their real intentions from each other. The formal aspect of a dialogue was more suitable in sustaining the social decorum, while the tension resulting from the suppressed feelings of the characters could fray its surface. The dialogue, for example, between Hamlet and Polonius in the 'Fishmonger scene' (2.2) is suggestive more of the forces that the social decorum is vulnerable to. Macbath's conversation with the murderers is anything but congenial for a social order. Still it can be seen that Shakespeare uses dialogues more for locating scenes, supplying information, and providing the linkages - materials which would not otherwise have been possible to accommodate, than for suggesting the rupture in the social formalism.

The monologue on the other hand can be alligned with the soliloquy as it provides isolation for the speaker, though to what degree the presence of the silent listener or listeners modify his thoughts is also to be ascertained. That the monologue was given almost the same emphasis as the soliloquy can be understood from the fact that in *King Lear* many of Lear's soliloquies are not soliloquies proper because Lear is not alone on the stage at the time of their delivery, and hence the justification of Clemen's calling them 'soliloquizing speeches' rather than soliloquies.[9]

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[6] Arnold, p. 21.

[7] Arnold, p. 21.

[8] Bradbrook, p. 112.

[9] Wolfgang Clemen, *Shakespeare's Soliloquies*, tr. Charity Scott Stokes (Methuen & Co Ltd., London), p. 171. This is a very good book for literary insights into the soliloquy.

The asides, according to M. C. Bradbrook, was a bridge between dialogue and soliloquy.[10] She further says that while the short asides were given to villains for unfolding their schemes, the long ones used by the major characters were equivalent to soliloquies.[11]

In defining the nature of the soliloquy, Arnold has divided Shakespeare's soliloquies into six groups highlighting the following themes: *narration, passion, comedy, morality, introspection* and *disappearance*.

In the first group he includes plays from *Henry VI, Part I* to *The Comedy of Errors* saying that at this stage Shakespeare's soliloquies are "crudely narrative, . . .histrionically grandiose, . . . [and] extremely artificial."[12] The second group includes plays from *King John* to *Romeo and Juliet* where a ruling passion dominates the soliloquies.[13] The third group includes the plays from *Henry IV, Part I* to *The Merry Wives of Windsor* where the soliloquy is used as a rhetorical ornament.[14] The fourth group "extends from *Julius Caesar* to *Measure for Measure*," where Shakespeare makes a definite advance in modulating the psychological motives of the soliloquizer.[15] Arnold further says that soliloquies of this period, especially in the tragedies, seem to adopt the technique of both being related and unrelated to the theme: "They are linked with the plot and yet they could easily be dropped from the action."[16] The fifth group which spreads from *Hamlet* to *Timon of Athens* contains the soliloquies of the most distinctive kind. The soliloquies here, as Arnold says, are not different from the earlier ones in kind, but in degrees.[17] Here the characters show the greatest depth of insight, and their introspective ability determines the mode of action. Hamlet probably has in Brutus his predecessor in terms of introspection, but while Brutus's introspective thoughts are mere generalizations.

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[10] Bradbrook, p. 121.
[11] Bradbrook, p. 121.
[12] Arnold, p. 41.
[13] Arnold, p. 42.
[14] Arnold, p. 42.
[15] Arnold, pp. 42-3.
[16] Arnold, p. 43.
[17] Arnold, p. 44.

Hamlet's soliloquies "pulse with the very anguish of his spirit."[18] Showing the difference further between the earlier soliloquies and those of this period, Arnold writes:

> Angelo's conscience is revealed, but in a sort of dilettant fashion - a slight pain, as it were, which disturbs the pleasure. The conscience of Macbeth is a disease which eats into his soul. Introspection becomes wormwood in the misanthropic meditations of Timon, tinged with the mannerism of classical precedent. Indeed the thought element of this group is strained to the breaking point. Hamlet's broodings are close to the verge of insanity, as commentators and physicians have testified, while Lear's ravings break the bonds.[19]

The last group includes soliloquies in plays from *Pericles* to *Henry VIII*, and is marked with a loss of impetus in tone and significance.[20]

Bradbrook has identified two major groups: the narrative soliloquies which, in fact, are expository speeches, and the soliloquies which are used for giving the moral.[21] In exemplifying the latter group she mentions *Tamburlaine* in particular in which the dialogue hardly matters, while the total significance of the play is held out through the hero's long-soaring speeches. Shakespeare also has moralistic soliloquies in such utterances as Lear's 'Plate sin with gold' or Macbeth's 'Life is a tale told by an idiot', but in the context they are much individualized, and appear not so moralistic as well-perceived statements of experience.

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[18] Arnold, p. 44.
[19] Arnold, p. 44.
[20] Arnold, pp. 44-5. It maybe of interest to note that Arnold has provided a rough table of total number of lines spoken in the form of soliloquies in all plays of Shakespeare. We reproduce it here in a condensed form: *1 Hen VI (90),2 Hen VI (221),3Hen VI(351), TA (85), LLL (153), TGV (207), CE (62), KJ (21), R III (245), R II (79),MND (237), TS (78), MV (41), R J (293), 1 Hen IV (142), 2Hen IV (177), Hen V (131), MWW (195), JC (158), MAN (118), AYLI (36), TN (213), TC (144), AWW (123), MM (131), Ham (291), Oth (172), Lear (185), Macb (245), Tim (210), Per(190), AC (92), Cor (36), Cym (430), WT (153), Tem (73), & Hen VIII (59), pp. 25-6.*
[21] In fact, Arnold has also identified two major functions of the soliloquies: 1) The soliloquy as the means of exposition, and 2) The soliloquy as an accompaniment of the action.

Bradbrook has also noticed two more aspects of the soliloquy such as its impersonality and its timelessness. In explaining the first aspect, Bradbrook again mentions Tamburlaine, saying that his speeches do not contain personal feelings, but concerns for the world in a general way. This may be supported by what Clemen has thought about Eliot's view of the Elizabethan soliloquy.[22] Eliot viewed that some of Shakespeare's heroes talk about themselves as if they were other selves. Hamlet, King Lear, Macbeth and Othello all in their soliloquies distance themselves from the burden of their feelings. Through this process Clemen thinks that a kind of 'self-dramatization' takes place within the soliloquy which finally results into creating a 'partner' for the speaker.[23] This idea is pertinent for understanding the interrogative mood displayed by Hamlet in his soliloquies, where his questions seem to address an invisible by-stander.

The timelessness or the universality of the Elizabethan soliloquies can be understood by the spirit in the great utterances of Shakespeare's heroes. In *Hamlet*, more than in *King Lear*, the universal order is called upon and questioned, while in the latter the protagonist's consciousness is oriented more toward the discrepancies in social classes, the difference between the privileged who can bend justice and the unprivileged who are pinched by law for the smallest of crimes: "Plate sin with gold / And the strong lance of justice hurtless breaks" (4.4.163-4).

The timeless aspect of the soliloquies should also be linked with the physical structure of the Elizabethan stage, particularly that of the Golobe theatre. Coleridge had long ago pointed to the neutral dimension of the Globe stage by calling it a bare board.[24] Because of its being open on three sides, and having lacked in artificial adornments, the Globe stage was most flexible in its use, and plays of all sorts could be mounted on it without impairing credibility. It was an open platform that could take on any symbolical expression from Hamlet's 'Denmark's a prison' (2.2.243) to 'this wooden O' (*Henry V*, Pro. ) showing the resemblance of the Globe with the world. Naturally, the flexible ambience of the theatre encouraged utterances universalising the issues.

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[22] Clemen, p. 6.

[23] Clemen, p. 11.

[24] Referred to by Bradbrook, p. 11.

**The Soliloquy before Shakespeare**

Arnold has traced the development of soliloquy since the time of classic tragedy and comedy. He thinks that the classical tradition as well as the early English tradition has 5helped shaping the mature soliloquies of Shakespeare. In ancient Greece the prevalent form, which the ancient actor Thespis used in 535 B.C., was monologue. In order to remove the confusion between monologues and soliloquies, Arnold says that all soliloquies are monologues, but all monologues are not soliloquies. That is, when the actor uses a monologue he is aware that there are one or more listeners present, but the soliloquizer is absolutely certain that he is alone. That is, he believes that he is alone. Most of the monologues in Shakespeare appear in the form of shorter asides. Arnold refers to the following conversation between Caesar and Trebonius in order to clarify the difference between the monologue and the soliloquy.

Caesar asks Trebonius to be near him, to which the latter replies,

> Caesar, I will; (apart [aside]) and so near will I be,
> That your best friends shall wish I had been further. (2.2.124-5)

Arnold comments that Trebonius's response is not a soliloquy because "he is aware of Caesar's presence, and consequently he does not believe himself alone."[25]

Further the aside is muttered with some obvious sense of superficiality, either to be impressive as to win the support of the audience, or to follow a villain's trick as to indicate a different line of action. But longer asides, as that used by Macbeth in 1.4.126-41 ("Two truths are told . . ."), maybe considered as soliloquies because the import of such speeches goes beyond the functional limitation of the asides. The fact that some of Shakespeare's asides can assume the status of soliloquies is a measure of his deft handling of such speech devices.

The soliloquy was used in ancient Greek plays. Aeschylus uses the device in *Agamemnon* and *Eumenides*, and in *Prometheus Bound* the soliloquy is "phrased as

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[25] Arnold, p. 3.

prayers to the elements as well as to the gods."[26] That the soliloquy had the theatrical potential was realised by Sophocles, and he uses it to depict a moving passion, as Ajax does in the suicide soliloquy, and Electra in her lamentation.[27]

Seneca used the soliloquy mainly for exposition. His soliloquies such as Media's frenzied incantation are aided by his very good grip of rhetorical flourishes.[28] In fact, Seneca is very successful in creating the atmosphere of horror through his soliloquies, as is evident in the Nurse's speech in the fourth act of *Medea*.[29] And, it is Seneca whose influence enriched such soliloquies as appear in *Everyman* and in *Hamlet*.[30]

Arnold notes that in English miracle and mystery plays the soliloquies are short and infrequent. They are often very crude, just narratives used for story-telling. However infrequent they maybe, Arnold thinks that some of the soliloquies that appear in the Towneley plays and in the York cycle anticipate Shakespeare: "Satan's frank avowal of villainy . . . with its note of dramatic irony giving histrionic point to the crude plottings of the villain, subsequently becomes conventionalized, and gains its ultimate expression in the superb declarations of Gloster at the opening of Shakespeare's 'Richard the Third'."[31]

The morality tradition made good use of the soliloquy in moralizing themes. Many a morality play uses monologues for delivering sermons, which later on becomes evident in soliloquies used in the Elizabethan tragedy. The influence of the morality play on the formation of the Elizabethan soliloquy consists in the former having the moralizing soliloquy which, according to Arnold, has "a tendency towards introspection together with a disclosure of the workings of conscience."[32]

The *Tenne Tragedies* (1559-81), the popular translation of Seneca, contains soliloquies that anticipate the rich emotional introspective dimension of the English soliloquy.[33] This also accounts for the presence of substantially lengthy soliloquies in

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[26] Arnold, p. 6.
[27] Arnold, p. 6
[28] Arnold, p. 6.
[29] Arnold, p. 6
[30] Arnold, p. 8
[31] Arnold, p. 8
[32] Arnold, p. 8

[33] Arnold, p. 9

such early plays as *Gorboduc*.[34] In fact, the popular convention was to mix the native tradition of the miracle and morality play with that of Plautus and Seneca. Whetstone's double tragedy *Promos and Cassandra* paves the way for Shakespeare in the sense that its soliloquies show the technical accomplishment that were to be respected by Shakespeare.[35]

However, the two dramatists who exploited the convention of the soliloquy to a success before Shakespeare are Kyd and Marlowe. Kyd adds spontaneity and sincerity to the soliloquy. He also tries to portray the psychological struggle in the protagonist's heart through the soliloquy. Though his play *The Spanish Tragedy* is melodramatic, and its twenty-nine soliloquies are mere rhetorical exercises, yet they seem to have been occasioned by sincere feelings. Even Hieronimo's eight soliloquies, though apparently extravagant ravings, ring true in the context of the play, as they emanate from the hero's anguished desire for revenge.[36]

But the man to whom Shakespeare owes the heaviest is Christopher Marlowe. He is such a good master of subject and technique that he infuses a new spirit into the soliloquy. He defines his major characters through the soliloquy. His verses are finely tuned up to the mood of the soliloquizer. His soliloquies are informed with a unified sensibility. The thought and feeling are wedded together. Shakespeare learnt from this master how to use the introspective soliloquy, as Arnold says, to illuminate the tragic crisis.[37] The following passage from Arnold, however, defines Shakespeare's soliloquy in relation to Marlowe's:

> Marlowe himself is merely the touchstone to Shakespeare's genius. In lyric grandeur and passionate intensity the meditations of Tamburlaine and Faustus are unsurpassed, but the soliloquies of Hamlet and Macbeth

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[34] Arnold, p. 9.
[35] Arnold, p. 10.
[36] Arnold, p. 14.
[37] Arnold, p. 14.

> are distinguished not only by these qualities but also by a poignant sincerity.[38]

Clemen has also traced the relation between Shakespeare's soliloquies and those of his predecessors.[39] He says that the pre-Shakespearean drama used soliloquies more for functional purposes than for showing the inner conflict of the character. However, Dr Faustus, if not Tamburlaine, is an exception. His utterances do authenticate his inner conflict. In general, soliloquies before Shakespeare were used for giving information, clarifying the plot, and predicting future action, i.e, more in the nature of things performed by the chorus or the prologue.

Clemen, like Bradbrook, holds that while Shakespeare's soliloquies were introspective in nature, those of his predecessors were a point of contact between the actors and the audience. What Shakespeare did was to shift to the dialogue much of the material which previously was conveyed through the soliloquy. Shakespeare became aware, as we said earlier, of the dramatic potentiality within the soliloquy, and, therefore, Clemen has a hunch that while in the case of the earlier dramatists the soliloquies were always held truer than dialogues, Shakespeare probably did not mean his soliloquies to be taken for straight confessions. On the question whether Shakespeare makes his characters "give expression to a false or distorted self-image" in soliloquies, the debate can go on as we find another critic, M. M. Reese, holding a completely opposite view. Reese notes that we are to take Shakespeare's soliloquies "at their face value" as "he never cheats the audience."[40] But our study will show that some of the soliloquies, especially Hamlet's "To be or not to be", are deceptive of the protagonists' true intentions.

In another respect where Shakespeare is held superior to his predecessors is his making the soliloquies inhere in the play. Clemen further argues that Shakespeare relates his soliloquies organically to the theme. He is also appreciative of Shakespeare's placing the soliloquies in the text just where the audience is expecting them. Whenever we

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[38] Arnold, p. 14.
[39] Clemen, pp. 1-12.
[40] M. M. Reese, *Shakespeare: His World and His Work* (Revised Edition, Edward Arnold, rpt. 1964), p. 164.

perceive that one of the characters in the dialogue is rather restless and looking for an opportunity to be alone, we know that a soliloquy is in the offing.

> The soliloquy expresses something which has all the appearance of inevitability and credibility. In many cases we become aware of the fundamental truth that in seeing one character in conversation with another, we only gain a partial and inadequate knowledge of each; we long to know the real person hidden beneath this shell. Or again, we may recognise that something which has been building up over several scenes, without the exact details and intricacies having become quite clear, must be aired and clarified in soliloquy.[41]

The introspective value of the soliloquy is thus recognised.

**The Soliloquies and the Actors:**

The production of the stage plays in Shakespeare's time depended wholly on the performance of the actors. The plays would succeed, if the actors were successful. The actors therefore had to be "talented, hard-working, and versatile."[42] The plays were offered almost every afternoon except for a break at Lent. A play took nearly two weeks for rehearsal before it could be presented on the stage. In the meantime the company would continue to play a variety of plays, which kept the actors busy round the clock. As there was no supply of printed copies the actors would often be given their respective 'parts' in isolation from each other, and their only way to know about the sequence was the clue lines that were given from other characters' speeches. The bookholder, or the prompter, took care of the timely entrance and exit of the charcters. He also saw to it that the actors came to the stage properly costumed and equipped. An actor could be fined for

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[41] Clemen, p. 9.
[42] Stanley Wells & Gary Taylor, eds., *The Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1988), p. xxiv. All the information about the actors in this passage is taken from this book, pp. xxiv-xxv.

lack of punctuality. Often actors were required to play double roles. There was a great demand on the exactitude of the actors' memories. It is not surprising that many of the quartos of Elizabethan plays were put in print from the actors' memories, and that indirectly also made editing an Elizabethan text an exacting job for the modern editors. The actors had to be thoroughly professional too. The boy actors ("an eyerie of children, little eyases," *Ham*: Rosencrantz: 2.2.340) did not lack in talent and skill either, and their grooming was thrust to the leading actors. It is the boys who played the female roles.

Besides being the greatest dramatist, Shakespeare was also an actor and manager. He is known to have acted in the role of Hamlet's father's ghost. He was an active member of the Chamberlaine's Men, which with the accession of James I, became the King's Men. He knew the actor's craft too well, and also was aware of the potentialities as well as limitations of his fellow actors.[43] There is evidence that Shakespeare sometimes modified his writing to suit a particular actor's propensities.

As the provision for the director was not yet created, the actor had to depend on his own wisdom in producing the best acting. And, as he had to act in open day light, he had always to try to get the audience to concentrate on his acting, making them avoid all distractions. The actors were not given the whole copy of the play, only the parts with some cues that he were to act.[44] During the peak season the acting companies remained so busy that very few plays were performed more than once during a week.[45]

Before Shakespeare came to write for the stage, Richard Tarlton was the most notable stage clown, and his popularity mainly resided in his ability to produce jest and wit extempore. Will Kempe was involved with Shakespeare's group, and he was the last Elizabethan clown famous for his harlequinade and jigs. Many suggest that Hamlet's reprimand of the Player King's utterances 'tearing a passion to tatters'(*Ham* III ii 10) or 'out-heroding Herod' (*Ham* III ii 14) was a pointed criticism of Kempe's style of acting.

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[43] *The* Revels *History of Drama in English* (Methuen & Co. Ltd., London, 1975), Vol. III, 1576-1613. Chap II: "The Companies and Actors," pp. 97-117.

[44] *The* Revels *History of Drama in English*, pp. 97-117.

[45] *The* Revels *History of Drama in English*, pp. 97-117. Also see Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage, 1574-1642* (Cambridge University Press, Second Edition, 1987), pp. 85-89.

But the criticism is probably aimed more at Edward Alleyn, the owner and chief actor of the Admiral's Men (the rival company) who acted in Marlowe's heroic plays *Tamburlaine, the Great* and *Barabas* and made himself known as 'the stalking Tamburlaine'.[46] His stentorian voice is probably what Hamlet ridicules. Alleyn also acted as Faustus, and as Orlando in Greene's *Orlando Furioso*. Alleyn was one of the English actors whose fame as actor spread beyond the sea. Alleyn made his fortune through acting, and founded Dulwich College.[47]

However, Alleyn's popularity seems to have been on the wane, partly because with the loss of the popularity of patterned speech and formalized utterances, his scope for acting was also reduced, and partly because he gave more time to management of the theatre than to acting.

Richard Burbage, the genius of an actor, was the chief performer of Shakespeare's Chamberlaine's Men and, later, King's Men. His name appears in all the plays of King's Men "for which the list of actors survive between 1599 and 1608."[48] He was renowned as a tragic actor, and "the elegy on his death lists among his parts Hamlet, Lear, Othello and Hieronimo."[49] It has been held that one of Sir Thomas Overbury's *Characters*, 'An Excellent Actor' has lines that bear on Burbage's mode of acting:

> He doth not strive to make nature monstruous, she is often seen in the same Scaene with him, but neither on Stilts nor Crutches; and for his voice tis not lower than the prompter, nor lowder than the Foile and Target.[50]

That is exactly what Hamlet meant the ideal speech to be when he delivered instructions on acting to the First Player:

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[46] Gurr, p. 88.
[47] Wells *et al*, p. xxv.
[48] Reese, p. 165.
[49] *The* Revels *History of Drama in English*, p. 106.
[50] *The* Revels *History of Drama in English*, p. 106.

> I would have such a fellow whipped for o' erdoing Termagent. It out-Herods Herod. Pray you avoid it.....Be not too tame neither, but let your own discretion be your tutor. Suit the action to the word, the word to the action, with this special observance, that you o'erstep not the modesty of nature. For anything so o'erdone in from the purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first and now, was and is to hold as 'twere the mirror up to nature.
>
> (*Ham* 3.2.13-22)

Remembering his fellow members' abilities and limitations well, Shakespeare created characters acting out which would prove to be too demanding on the part of his fellow actors, but at the same time they would not be asked to perform the impossible.[51] Burbage's acting potentialities might surely have inspired Shakespeare into writing characters that would do justice to his talent. As the theatre group, The King's Men, worked with excellent understanding between the dramatists and the actors, we can fairly assume that both Shakespeare and Burbage worked in tandem while mounting a play. Reese's assertion about the solidarity between the two is quotable:

> Without Burbage there would have been no Lear, or there would have been a different Lear. If Burbage was fortunate in having Shakespeare to write for him, Shakespeare too was fortunate in having Burbage to realize his visions. The two men grew up together, and the mighty progression from Richard III to Lear is one that neither could have made without the other.[52]

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[51] Reese, pp. 169-70.

[52] Reese, p. 170.

Though Robert Armin was also a pioneer in bringing a 'more delicate, introspective, and sophisticated style of fooling'[53] as exemplified in Lear's Fool, the change from Kempe to Armin cannot be called basically a change in kind, as the change from Alleyn to Burbage marks a watershed in Elizabethan acting. Burbage's protean versatility as actor would have qualified him to modulate the patterned laments of Richard II as much as it would have found him not lacking in uttering the soliloquies in Shakespeare's great tragedies.

**The Elizabethan Playhouses:**

The permanent Elizabethan theatres were both public and private. The public theatres were the main hub of theatrical activities. The Theatre, the Curtain, the Swan, the Rose, the Fortune, and the Globe were the famous playhouses of the time. Since the Globe playhouse was owned by Shakespeare's company, the Lord Chamberlain's-King's Men, and his fame is identified with the history of this theatre, we will take the opportunity here to write a few lines about it..

The Globe Playhouse ('this wooden O') was built by the Lord Chamberlain's Men in 1599. Actually, Cuthbert and Richard Burbage, the two sons of James Burbage, the founder of the first public playhouse in England, called the Theatre, were the owners. The location was called Bankside, which was a quarter of a mile to the west of London Bridge and about 150 yards from the river Thames. The timber of the recently dismantled playhouse, the Theatre, furnished as material for the construction of the edifice. The Globe burned down on 29 June 1613, during a performance of Shakespeare's *Henry VIII*. Except for a few contemporary references, among which is that of a Swiss traveller, Thomas Platter, who records as having seen a performance of *Julius Caesar* in September 1699 at the Globe, no picture of the details of the theatre is available. However, another public theatre like the Globe was the Swan, a map of which, still surviving, acts as a model for documentary study of the Elizabethan stage. Another point of reference is that Philip Henslowe, the financier of the Fortune, a public theatre built in 1600, wrote in his famous *Diary* about the contract he had had with Peter Street, the

[53] *The* Revels *History of Drama in English*, p. 107.

architect of the Globe, which reveals his intention to build the Fortune, exactly with the same design as the Globe. Though very little is known about the physical features of the Globe, stage historians have reconstructed them on the basis of their knowledge about the Swan and the Fortune, in none of which had Shakespeare's company ever played.

The Globe, or for that matter any other public theatre, was built on the model of the inn-yard where plays were performed before the building of the professional theatres. Though most of the public theatres were either round or polygonal, the Globe was a round building having a polygonal ground plan with three tiers of gallery on three sides of it, and having a vacant pit in the centre for the groundlings to stand and watch the show. These groundlings had to keep standing, because the main platform of the stage which jutted out to almost half of the ground from the back stage was raised about five feet from the ground. Sometimes the actors came so close to these cheap spectators that the latter could touch the former if they so liked. Evidence shows that this body of audience was rather unruly. The raising of the stage helped to create an understage from which Hamlet's father's Ghost cries out for revenge. The understage was also useful for placing the trap or trapdoor, very functional in making the Ghost of *Hamlet* vanish before the eyes of the audience, saying 'Adieu, adieu', or lifting of the heads of children by the witches in *Macbeth*. The Globe was about 100 feet in diameter and 36 feet in height, and the main platform or the main stage was about 66 feet long and about 27 feet deep. There were two doors on two sides on the back wall which were used by the actors to enter or exit from the stage. Philip Edwards in his New Cambridge Shakespeare edition of *Hamlet* shows how the Ghost enters by one of the doors, then occupies a centre position on the stage which is the spot where the trapdoor is fixed, and, after his conversation with Hamlet is over, the trapdoor opens, and he disappears into the understage.[54] The depth of the stage, that is the distance from the front edge to the backstage, was essential to give time to the group of actors (or an actor) who are performing an action on the front stage to have enough time to see that another group of actors (or an actor) are appearing from the backstage. The front stage and the backstage were not divided physically, but the

[54] Philip Edwards, ed. *Hamlet: Prince of Denmark* (The New Cambridge Shakespeare, Cambridge, 1985), p. 44.

division was conceived hypothetically, providing, thereby, a kind of ease necessary for making such scenes as eavesdropping effective. Half of the main stage was covered with a roof made of thatch supported by a pair of pillars, behind which, if required, the actors could hide themselves. The roof had a provision known as the canopy to which certain devices, or suspension gears, were fixed which could be lowered or pulled up for actors to climb down or go up. A god or goddess could swing down onto the stage by one of these suspension gears. There was the upper station or the upstage connected by staircase, presumably two, from which the music was often played. The famous balcony scene in *Romeo and Juliet* was materialised through the upstage. In *Antony and Cleopatra*, when Cleopatra confines herself in the tower, and the injured Antony is brought at its foot, the upstage must have been the room for Cleopatra for her confinement. Music was a very important component of the Globe performances. When there is a Sennet or Herald, it is to be related with the entrance and exit of the royal personages. More importantly, however, elaborate music was often introduced to let silent moments pass. And, when music accompanied the staging of a battlefield, it meant that a long-drawn fracas had taken place. Behind the backstage was the tire room or clothing room, or in modern sense 'the green room'.

The Elizabethan stage was rich in supply of garments. The companies spent lavishly on costumes. To create special stage effects, such appearance as that of Rumour entering 'painted full of tongues' in *2 Henry IV* is not uncommon. Sometimes the dramatists wanted to preserve naturalism by making the actors wear historically correct dresses. But lack of knowledge caused such anachronistic application as Shakespeare's making Cleopatra wear a farthingale (a frame of hoops worn beneath the skirt to expand it at the hip line), which was worn by the Elizabethan women, but was unknown to the Egyptians.

Of the few solid stage props that Shakespeare made frequent use of were a 'state', a throne, a bed, a pair of stocks, a taper, a recorder, a cauldron, a rose brier, a bush, etc..

The Globe could accommodate about 2050 people at a time, and as the plays were held in the afternoon for people to attend after their work, the theatre proved to be the most attractive entertainment. The price of ticket was one penny per person.

It is studied that a total of twenty-nine plays may have been charted for performance by the Chamberlain's-King's Men at the Globe during the period 1599-1608, and of these 16 were by Shakespeare. All the four plays we are discussing in this thesis were performed at the Globe.[55]

The Globe was exceptional in one sense that it was not rented out to other theatre groups, but was owned and conducted completely by the members of the Chamberlain's-King's Men. They conducted it by sharing the loss and profit. The business at the Globe was very successfully conducted, which made it possible for Shakespeare to retire from active life as a rich man, five years before his death.

**Rhetoric:**

Rhetoric, the technique of verbal communication, was an essential component of the Elizabethan education. It was the discipline of speech and gesture that every Elizabethan child, including Shakespeare, was supposed to have a good grounding on. At the time "verbal activity was a field of public entertainment, to be enjoyed in sermons, pamphlets, the law courts and in courtly society, as well as in the theatre."[56] As it was an art of persuasion, it created a form consistent with the rituals of the Christian liturgy.[57] " It taught the actor how to use his voice, hold his head, control his feet and hands."[58] Rhetoric was also essential for the dramatic composition in that a mastery of the intricate formalities of rhetoric was what considered to be the style by the Elizabethans. The actors' voice modulation had to be as realistic as possible, for which a deep knowledge of the rhetorical rules was great help. On this capacity of the actor the dramatist put great value, as M .M . Reese writes:

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[55] The information about the stage is available in any standard handbook on the Elizabethan stage. I have depended on many several books which are Wells et al., *Oxford Shakespeare*; *The* Revels *History of Drama in English, Vol. 3;* M. M. Reese, *Shakespeare: His World and His Work*, and others.

[56] Sydney Bolt, *Hamlet* (Penguin Critical Studies, 1990), p. 44.

[57] Reese, p. 164.

[58] Reese, p. 164.

> The actor trained in Rhetoric commanded all the effects of which the human voice, by subtle variations of pitch and range and pace, is capable. By power of speech, almost unaided by scenic device, he had to give a location to the bare platform on which he stood, create an atmosphere of darkness or revelry or mounting tension, perhaps embody a picture of something that never existed, of Ophelia's death in the glassy stream, or Cleopatra's barge or the popinjay courtier at Holmedon.[59]

While locations, settings, and the atmosphere were created by the rhetorical devices, the historical aspects are also found to be clearly indicated. Shakespeare's great sense of theatre realism is evident when he refers to the convention of boys playing the female roles. He has Cleopatra refer to the boy actor's feminine voice playing in her role:

> ...and I shall see
> Some squeaking Cleopatra boy my greatness
> I'th' posture of a whore. (*AC* 5.2.219)

This is the only instance that the word 'boy' is used as a verb. But, everything has its fault. Rhetoric was a highly specialized art of elocution, and once its techniques and rules had been mastered the fear was that it could become too readymade, unable to produce a sense of urgency. It began to make expression so formalized that dramatic speech became forced, trite and stifling as exemplified in the following speech of Hieronimo's:

> O eyes, no eyes, but fountains fraught with tears;
> O life, no life, but lively form of death;
> O world, no world, but mass of public wrongs,
> Confus'd and fill'd with murder and misdeeds.
>
> *(The Spanish Tragedy III ii 1-4)*

[59] Reese, p. 164.

Patterned speech like the above proved to be the bane of a poet's craft, and, in fact, even two hundred years before the Elizabethan Age Chaucer had anticipated the danger of a formalized style when he ridiculed Geoffrey de Vinsauf, the writer of *De Nova Poetria*, in *The Nun's Priest's Tale* for his excessive obsession with the rules of rhetoric, which made the language too ornate and superficial. Moreover, the seventeenth century science, propagated by such thinkers as Francis Bacon, ruled that all rhetorical flourishes should be removed from the language. The words should mean precisely what they should mean.

Shakespeare himself provides the best example of the progress of the Elizabethan dramatic poetry from its rhetorical formalism, much in evidence in the *Henry VI* plays, to a natural cadence in his mature poetic drama like *Othello.*

In *Henry VI, Comedy of Errors* and *Titus Andronicus* - his early group of plays - one can find him struggling with the language, which tends to be rhetorical and declamatory rather than dramatic. His development was gradual. Often when his spontaneity failed him he would fall back upon the rhetorical verses as is evident in *Venus and Adonis.* Compared with it *Lucrece* is more natural and realistic. As he progresses he shows more awareness of how to escape from "the shackling influence of learned or traditional forms."[60] In *Henry VI* he describes the scene of the dawning of day:

> The day begins to break, and night is fled,
> Whose pitchy mantle over-veil'd the earth. (2.2.1-2)

This description has not related itself to the emotion of the character. It is like a Tennysonian way of describing a scene having no organic attachment with the character.

But then observe this extract from *Macbeth:*

> The west yet glimmers with some streaks of day:
> Now spurs the lated traveller apace

[60] Reese, p. 350.

To gain the timely inn; and near approaches
The subject of our watch. (3.3.5-8)

Here the description of the scene is so organically wedded with the purpose of the character that the exact objective correlative can be said to have been achieved. The scene is not anymore the background, but an inalienable context for the realization of the mood of the character.

Shakespeare's soliloquies develop gradually by acquiring the techniques of telling while gaining further access into human nature. That is, the more he achieves mastery over the techniques of soliloquy, the more liberated he becomes in characterising human nature. In the main chapters of the thesis we have tried to highlight how Shakespeare attains this art of reconciling the form with the content. The soliloquy then becomes both a controlling matrix and liberating channel. This concerted effect is found to be best produced in such soliloquies as "To be or not to be," in which Hamlet makes the rules of versification, not redundant, but unobtrusive, while still retaining the grandeur of poetry.

And in this regard, his history plays have soliloquies which indicate the process he matures in his great tragedies, where the protagonist uses the soliloquy mainly for its primary function, that is, self-revelation, but then goes on revealing more dimensions of his character. He lets us know about his dilemma, the fact that he is in a problem of choice, then he also makes his choice, and after this he goes on searching for the metaphysical certitude for his decision, and then he also distances himself from himself, or, creates a 'partner'[61], which may be a part of him, or some object like the knife in Macbeth's dagger soliloquy. Then sometimes he holds a dialogue with himself. In short, all these potential aspects of the soliloquy are fully explored in the great tragedies, but the history plays are symptomatic. For example, Iago's villainous streak, or Edmund's selfishness are well anticipated in Richard III's soliloquies, especially the one that opens the play. His pronouncement in this soliloquy that he will return the world's derision at him for his deformity by choosing to be a villain ("I am determin'ed to prove a villain"

[61] Clemen, p. 11.

(*R III*, 1.1.30.), foreshadows Iago's "What is he then that says I play the villain" (*Oth*, 3.1.327 ff), showing his resentment at the world for being superseded, and Edmund's major soliloquies: "Thou, nature, art my goddess" (*Lear*, 1.2.1 ff), or "This is the excellent foppery of the world" (*Lear*, 1.2.115), where Edmund is equally bitter for being born a bastard. His last soliloquy which expresses his realisation of his mistake gives clues to the shaping of the hallucinatory soliloquies given by Macbeth in self-revelation: "O coward conscience, how dost though afflict me" (*RIII*, 5.5.133 ff). He utters the word 'conscience' - which will carry a valuable meaning for Hamlet, Othello, and Macbeth - but refuses to acknowledge it: "Richard loves Richard; that is, I am I" (5.5.137). Similarly, creating a partner to run a dialogue, a phenomenon prevalent in the great soliloquies, is in the making in Richard II's prison soliloquy: "My brain I'll prove the female to my soul, / My soul the father . . ." (*R II*, 5.5.6-7).

Shakespeare's progress from apprenticeship to mastery has been well explained by Reese through a comparison between the Player's Hecuba speech in *Hamlet* and Enobarbus's recounting the barge scene in *Antony and Cleopatra*. The earlier is an example of supreme artistry, while the other is rhetoric running mad.[62]

Shakespeare's herculean feat can be better understood if we also remember that majority of the plays in his time - and particularly those staged on the Globe - were performed in the afternoon under the open sky with no help of artificial lighting. Shakespeare had to create Macbeth's urging of the night through words which would visualize the night atmosphere in the mind's eye of the audience. That really accounts for the concretizing power of Shakespeare's imagery. We refer to another passage in *Macbeth* to provide an example of what wonder imagery can effect:

> She should have died hereafter;
> There would have been a time for such a word.
> To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
> Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,

[62] Reese, p. 168.

To the last syllable of recorded time;
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more. It is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing. (5.5.17 ff)

"In these lines," as Reese says, "several groups of images are woven into a single texture."[63] Reese also quotes Lamb in describing the effect of the mixed metaphor or associated images: "before one idea has burst its shell, another is hatched and clamorous for disclosure."[64]

Another important feature of the soliloquies which we have already suggested in the *Preface* is that they do not give out a unified theme, they are multi-faceted, and do not yield to any monolithic investigation. In the *Preface* we have indicated why it is not possible to find the sequence of the soliloquy in a particular play as suggestive of any linear development of a given theme, neither why it is not subject to any single ideology. The reason is that the play is a unit whose one of the components is the soliloquy. Though the soliloquy is predominantly more evocative of the protagonist's psyche and his several motives, it does not, however, singly determine the proceedings of the play. The soliloquies cannot be left out of the play, the play will thereby become incomplete, but at the same time other speech parts, such as the dialogue, are equally functional. And, in fact, Moretti thinks that the soliloquies are disjointed features, that they do not necessarily forward the action, and that they show concerns which are far removed from the context of the given play. This view is very succinct, and we will show in our discussion of *Hamlet* how it is tenable in the context of the play, and, further, how it also supports our suggestion made in the *Preface* that the soliloquies are apt to help us to get

[63] Reese, p. 369.
[64] Reese, p. 369.

an idea about the major concerns (themes, issues, and ideologies) of Shakespeare as a writer. Though we do not suppose that Shakespeare's soliloquies are as unrelated (actually they are not, as our study will show) to the context as Moretti thinks they are, yet we are quoting him here at length to show that what he actually indirectly gives credit to is Shakespeare's craft of versification with a comment on which we will conclude the Introduction.

> With Shakespeare, the soliloquy fills a very different function - not of promoting the action or establishing its implications, but of retarding it and making its implications ungraspable. It is the site of doubt and irresolution: of 'the pale cast of thought' with which 'the native hue of resolution / is sicklied o'er' in Hamlet; of the 'words' that 'to the breath of deeds too cold breath gives' in Macbeth. Instead of the lucid Cornelian continuity between word and action, a radical discrepancy, or category difference, makes words impotent and actions mute. This mistrust in the practical force of language - so different from what his culture envisioned - makes Shakespeare's soliloquies the first manifestations of 'poetry' in the modern sense of being emancipated from a rhetoric conceived as the art of convincing. Whereas in the Cornelian soliloquy, the hero prescribed to himself the actions he would then perform, establishing in fact a complete rhetorical circuit, the Shakespearean hero by contrast addresses no one - neither a part of himself, nor another character, nor even the audience. Having no addressee, his words do not even participate in the dramatic context. Though it frequently happens (in *Hamlet*, I.iv, and in *Macbeth*, V,v) that the hero begins a soliloquy in the presence of other charcters, these do not hear him, and the soliloquy can end only when the action - a principle now heterogeneous and hostile to his reflections - returns to claim its own rights. When, therefore, an idealist aesthetic excerpts these passages and transforms them into 'poems', the critical operation, however, illegitimate, has intuitively understood the

> dramatically absurd character of the soliloquies. The other charcters do not even hear them; they have no connection to the action; it is never clear what is the 'object' of their reflection - indeed the character who pronounces them retains no memory of them, so that Hamlet and Macbeth must begin their entire reasoning afresh every time they soliloquize.[65]

Moretti later on develops the idea that poetry is born out of this disjoint between idea and reality.[66] We must bear in mind that Shakespeare was not writing dramatic poetry which seems to be the meaning Moretti has taken explaining his tendency to consider the soliloquies as the seed-bed of modern poetry, but Shakespeare was writing poetic drama whose basic requirement was that the drama must inhere in poetry, the difference between these two being that in the first category poetry may still be an ornate, decorative piece, as it is in the passage about the fleeting moonlight in *The Merchant of Venice*, and in the later category poetry and character become one, as they do in the storm scene in *Lear*.[67] If the soliloquies were not dramatic enough, Shakespeare would not have written them just to be considered as good pieces of poems. We have noted above, while drawing on the development of the soliloquy in the hands of Shakespeare, that the more he matured the less artistry he employed in his soliloquy. The soliloquy becomes the perfect language of drama, shorn of all superfluities. In his best soliloquies, where he exploited the unbounded freedom that the blank verse could afford him he approached a naturalness of speech which is inimitable even by the best of modern poetry. The unrhymed iambic pentameter, the basis for blank verse, has not only been polished to become the best speech medium, but it has also been stretched, the rules being toyed with, to suit to the outpourings of a Hamlet or a Lear. In *Hamlet*, for example, the iambic pentameter is tried to its full potential. Many of its lines do not have ten syllables as is required by the five iambs, but eleven. The very line "To *be* or *not* to

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[65]Franco Moretti, "The Great Eclipse: Tragic Form as the Deconstruction of Sovereignty," in John Drakakis, ed., *Shakespearean Tragedy* (Longman Critical Readers, London and New York, 1992), p. 65-66.

[66] Moretti, p. 68.

[67] Reese, p. 352.

*be / that is / the quest / ion*" has an additional syllable, which is unforced and thus does not create any impediment on the listener.[68] And the distinct language of Shakespeare is most recognisable when, as Reese says, "the blank verse line is no longer adequate for all that he needs to say and metre and syntax disintegrate under the overwhelming pressure of feeling."[69]

In the following chapters we have highlighted the soliloquies as having contained all the poetic aspects of Shakespeare. As our discussion is not necessarily a technical one we have given more attention to the ideas that the soliloquies treat than to the technical virtuosity. There is no denying the fact that Shakespeare's language in the soliloquies concerned is so natural that it is neither poetry nor prose, neither do we feel any impediments towards communicating with the speaker. The language, the character, and the circumstances become one, and qualify each other as readily as one is dependent on the other. We have adopted a very open approach, and have not analysed the soliloquies from a fixed critical theory, which to some extent would have been difficult too because Shakespeare's work defies to conform to any fixed theory. We have frequently drawn on cross-section of critics in clarifying our critical views. We have not even tried to give any single specific critical view, because that again seems to be rather inappropriate, as our study has manifested that the soliloquies evoke plurality of responses rather than a singular response. However, as the question is concerned with *our own critical response* to the bard's work, it is natural that we also commit ourselves to a definite reading of the plays. And we forward our critical judgment, howsoever tentative may it be, in the concluding chapter. This of course goes without saying that we do not hold on to any illusion of breaking new grounds in Shakespearean criticism, it was not our aim either, but we have tried to remain sincere in our humble efforts to appreciate the bard. The critical insight into Shakespeare has reached an enviable depth, and the volume of critical work is myriad and prodigious, so anybody approaching Shakespeare will feel

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[68] Bolt, p. 41.

[69] Reese, p. 363.

intimidated by this sheer pressure of work, will feel disappointed by realising that so much has been said about Shakespeare, and so true and accurate these are that there is *apparently* very little scope for a new critic to say things which have not been said earlier. We emphasised the word 'apparently' because our belief is that the above statement has a small grain of untruth in it, in the sense that the more is Shakespeare read into the more he seems to prove inexhaustible. So there is no reason to feel stifled about Shakespeare, and we did not feel that either. In fact, while pursuing our study we felt good about the fact that there are perhaps still places where one can come out with a new insight, which does not necessarily mean that we have said anything original, but which means that at some point or other we found something which the critics whom we had the opportunity to deal with had not said anything, or had merely hinted at, leaving the hunch incomplete. The question about Hamlet's father's sexuality is a point in hand. A feminine critic has merely hinted at the idea that he might be impotent, but we have developed the idea in our thesis. We have also tried to explain that the problem of Lear is that he demands kingly attention from his elder two daughters, whereas they are ready to offer him attention only as a father, and not as a king. Though it looks like a critical commonplace, not many critics whom we have considered have argued about it. However, we do not want to suffer from any sense of complacency, and, being aware of our very limitations, do not want to sound presumptuous either, especially as the fact remains that we have been able to consider only a very small body of criticism on Shakespeare.

I also take this opportunity to put on record that writing this thesis had been one of my most enjoyable tasks. I enjoyed reading Shakespeare, and also the writings on him and his plays. Although all through I found the job heavily demanding, and unsparing, I never felt uninspired, and basing on my experience I humbly submit that what I have learnt from my encounter with Shakespeare is this: that one has to enjoy whatever one is doing. The goal may be or may not be reached, but the pursuing of a goal is very important, and that matters. And, if one enjoys being kept engaged in life, he is a perfect Shakespearean.

Finally we will give a brief description of the facts about the four plays' composition and publication:

## Hamlet

*Hamlet* was written sometime between 1599 and 1601. The date of its publication, as it is entered on the Stationer's Register (SR), is July 26, 1602. The title was *The Revenge of Hamlet Prince* [of] *Denmark*. It also claimed that it was acted by the 'Lord Chamberlain his servants'. Shakespeare himself was one of the leading members of the Lord Chamberlain's Men. He was often credited with William Kempe and Richard Burbage, the two major performers of the company, which proves that he was an actor of some repute. Three versions of *Hamlet* exist. The First Quarto (Q1) appeared in 1603. It is an inferior text, as it was compiled from the actors' memories, and is, therefore, called a bad quarto. The Second Quarto (Q2) was printed in 1604 (some of the copies of this version also show the date as 1605), and it is held more authoritative as it is said to have been printed from Shakespeare's own manuscript, that is the 'foul-papers'. It is John Dover Wilson who proves that the 'foul-papers' were the basis for Q2 in his *The Manuscript of Shakespeare's* 'Hamlet'. It is the longest version too, having about 3,800 lines. The bad quarto has about 2,200 lines. The 1623 Folio (F) edition is about 230 lines shorter than the 1604 quarto, but has 70 additional lines, thus totalling 3,535 lines. However, critics are not in agreement about which one should be the authentic text between Q2 and the Folio. John Dover Wilson thought that the Folio was prepared from the theatre prompt-book, to which scholars such as Greg objected. Edwards thinks that the Folio was also prepared from the 'foul-papers', but then it was transcribed for the purpose of a theatre prompt-book. Gary Taylor and Stanley Wells, however, think that the Folio edition should be followed, so they exclude the soliloquy (the 7$^{th}$ and last soliloquy by Hamlet), "How all occasions do inform against me" (4.4.23 ff), from the main body of the play in their *Oxford Shakespeare* (1988) edition, but includes it in the group of passages called, "Additional Passages." But both Harold Jenkins and Philip Edwards include it in their Arden Shakespeare (1985) and New Cambridge Shakespeare (1985) editions respectively. On the other hand, the fact that the Q1 text is a bad copy can be understood by the fact that the "To be or not to be" soliloquy runs the first line as "To be or not to be, *ay there's the point*."

*Hamlet* is a protean text. It has innumerable sources. It is believed that there was a play on Hamlet which Shakespeare drew on for his material. This play is known as the *Ur-Hamlet*. It is not extant. Only a few contemporary references do suggest its existence. Thomas Lodge refers to this play before 1596, in which he mocks the Ghost as uttering *Hamlet revenge* 'like an oyster-wife'. There is a theory, not so far established, that Thomas Kyd might have been the author of *Ur-Hamlet*, as its story is similar to that of *The Spanish Tragedy*. Another probable source of *Hamlet* is *Historiae Danciae* written by Saxo (Grammaticus), in which the same elements of Shakespeare's story - 'fratricide, an incestuous marriage, feigned madness, and the ultimate achievement of a long-delayed revenge'[70]- are present. Belleforest, a Frenchman, who wrote *The Hystorie of Hamblet* is an important source for the portrayal of the Ghost. Belleforest refers to a shade which demands revenge, and Shakespeare develops it into the Ghost, and not only that, he makes it speak directly to a character, which was an innovative thing to do with a Ghost. There are other significant changes that are found in *Hamlet*, such as the introduction of the players, their play, the introduction of Laerets and Fortinbrass, and Hamlet's dying as he kills the king.

On the whole it is believed that until the nineteenth century, the fullest version of the play was never acted on the stage because of its sheer length. So, cuts and omissions are a regular feature in the staging of *Hamlet*. The only evidence of *Hamlet* being played at the Globe Playhouse is that of the Q1 (that is, the bad quarto), which suggests that the actors felt the need to speed up the action after Polonius's death. Sir William Davenant mentions Joseph Taylor as the actor who took it over from Richard Burbage (d. 1619) in the King's Men to act in the role of Hamlet. Thomas Betterton, who mainly relied upon the Players' Quarto of 1676, a severely cut version, was the main stage Hamlet from 1663 to 1709. Robert Wilks played the role until 1732, and to him goes the credit for staging the standard *Hamlet*. Lacy Ryan and Henry Giffard were important Hamlets before David Garrick came to the stage in 1742. He initially depended on Hughs-Wilk

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[70] Harold Jenkins, ed., *Hamlet* (The Arden Shakespeare, Methuen, London), p. 88.

text, but then, on his own confession, 'did the most imprudent thing'[71] in his life by playing the Ghost. He also restored the "How all occasions do inform against me" soliloquy from the Q2. John Philip Kemble (who acted in it from 1783 - 1817), went back to the play' leanest version, well under 3,000 lines. Charles Kean, acting from 1838 onward, restores the soliloquy, "How all occasions . . .", and Macready, for the first time draws the curtain on 'The rest is silence'. Edwin Booth (stage life: 1853-91), the first major American Hamlet, restored to the stage many of the omissions of the past. But, his play proved to be overlong. Henry Irving's stage version, which nearly lasted for four hours, was published in 1879. Forbes Robertson was the next important Hamlet, who being inspired by Bernard Shaw, resurrects Fortinbras and takes over the Danish throne nearly after two hundred years. William Poel produced the Q1 version in 1881, and, F. R. Benson produced the complete Folio version as well as the left out passages from Q2, and it took nearly six hours to play. Thus recognising the fact that the stage *Hamlet* always has to be an abridged version, Edwards comments that, "it never was . . . a work that the theatre could accommodate without severe alteration."[72] However, Martin Browne reports that for many years they acted the play, in its entirety, to the full house, at the Old Vic.

Othello

James I is reported to have seen a presentation of *Othello* in the Banqueting House at Whitehall on 1 November 1604. Shakespeare shows his familiarity with Richard Knolles' *History of the Turks*, published the year before, which deals with the Turkish invasion of Cyprus. So, Shakespeare might have completed writing the play between September 30, 1603 and the summer of 1604. A quarto print of the play came out in 1622, before its inclusion in the 1623 Folio. As the Folio version is about 160 lines longer than the quarto version, and as there are many changes and improvements in it, critics assume that the Folio used a revised quarto done by Shakespeare. As is the case with *Hamlet*, critics are divided about the more authentic text, and while Taylor and Wells prefer the F version,

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[71] Philip Edwards, ed., *Hamlet: Prince of Denmark* (New Cambridge Shakespeare, Cambridge, 1985), p. 64.

[72] Edwards, p. 66.

M. R. Ridley, the editor for Arden Shakespeare claims that the Q1 reading, free of its errors, provides a better Shakespearean text.

Kenneth Muir, in his Arden Shakespeare edition of *King Lear* supposes that Shakespeare might have written *Othello* before the publication of Q1 of *Hamlet* in 1603. He mentions Bradley as having found striking resemblance between these two plays in the uses of certain words and phrases (waterish, besort, potential unbonetted, deficient, and 'fortune's alms' (*Ham.*, 1.1.277; *Oth.*, 3.4.122, etc.) which do not appear in any other plays, or if they do, not with the same meaning.[73]

Shakespeare derives his story from an Italian collection of stories, *Gli Ecatommiti (The Hundred Tales)*(1565), written by Giambattista Cinzio Giraldi. Shakespeare might have read the story in the original or in the French translation of 1584, or he may have read both the versions, but the fact that he makes a black man a tragic hero is a bold and original stroke. Shakespeare introduces the characters of Roderigo and Brabantio, and also compresses the time scheme as to speed up the action. It was one of the first plays to be acted after the reopening of the theatres in 1660.

## King Lear

The play was written between March 1603 and Christmas 1606. Two different versions of the play exist, the Quarto text of 1608, and the Folio edition. Modern critics have so far conflated the two versions in one play, but Taylor and Wells, based on research in the '80s and '90s, claim that while the Quarto edition reproduces what Shakespeare originally wrote, the Folio edition preserves the text which was substantially revised by Shakespeare. They, therefore, print both the versions in their anthology, *The Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Shakespeare* (1988), naming the Quarto text as *The History of King Lear*, and the Folio text as *The Tragedy of King Lear*. They agree that each version has its own integrity.[74] While introducing the Folio text (which we have followed for our discussion), they mention the cuts which include such scenes as Lear's

[73] Kenneth Muir, ed. *King Lear* (The Arden Shakespeare, Methuen, 1972), p. xxii.

[74] Wells et al., p. 975.

mock-trial, in his madness, of his daughters (Quarto Sc. 13, 13-52). Muir argues in favour of the Folio text, saying, "There is now fairly general argument that the F text is not only more accurately printed, but also much nearer to what Shakespeare wrote, than that of Q."[75] A few lines down he further writes that "Q is substantially inferior to F, and that the latter must therefore serve as the basis of a modern text."

About its source, Shakespeare could come upon this story of a king putting his daughters to a love test in several writings. While reading the *Chronicles* by Holinshed or *A Mirror for Magistrates* for his history plays, Shakespeare may have found the story of King Lear there. Or, Spenser's *Fairie Queen* (Book 2, canto 10) might have suggested him the idea. But the more reliable source proves to be the play, *The True Chronicle History of King Leir and his three daughters*, published in 1605, but probably written about fifteen years before. The author is unknown. Even then Shakespeare's version is an example of his stunt originality. His portrayal of Lear's suffering, as well as the last stages of his life, and the introduction of the sub-plot (based on an episode in Sidney's *Arcadia)* about Gloster and his two sons are places where Shakespeare has far outpaced his predecessor.

## Macbeth

Compared to the above three tragedies *Macbeth* is exceptionally short, and was written before 1606 with an eye to the fact that King James I (James VI of Scotland) had claimed Banquo as his predecessor, removed by seven generations. So, Banquo is called 'noble Banquo' in *Macbeth*. Another fact is that when James succeeded to the English throne, in 1603, he became a patron of Shakespeare's company, which led to the changing of the Lord Chamberlain's Men into the King's Men. So, in *Macbeth* an attempt is taken to establish a relationship between the King and his subjects, which is violated by Macbeth.

The 1623 Folio presents the first printed text of *Macbeth*. The text shows that other writers might have a hand, especially Thomas Middleton, in its composition. Though the adaptation does not affect the integrity of Shakespeare's text, critics think that Middleton

[75] Muir, p. xiv.

might have written the Hecate episodes with the octosyllabic couplets which are different from the style of the rest of the play.

Shakespeare depended for his materials on Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicle* of the reigns of Duncan and Macbeth (AD 1034 - 57). He closely followed Holinshed's wording in the English scenes (Act 4, Scene 2), but then he comes out in his original in the rest of the play. The three witches are his own invention, and his "Macbeth is more introspective and more intensely evil than the competent warrior-king portrayed by Holinshed; conversely, Shakespeare made Duncan, the king whom Macbeth murders, far more venerable and saintly."[76]

[76] Wells et al , p. 975.

## Hamlet

The sequence of the seven soliloquies spoken by Hamlet is the following: 1.2.129-59; 1.5.92-113; 2.2.551-607; 3.1.58-92; 3.2.377-88; 3.3.72-96; and 4.4.23-57.[1] Besides him only Claudius speaks any soliloquies: two in total at 3.2.36-72 and 4.3.60-70 respectively. In *Hamlet*, soliloquies both informative and reflective are used, and the structural essentiality of them is also recognised. More importantly they are integrally connected with the central character, Hamlet, who without his soliloquies is virtually difficult to comprehend. And, in this play, Shakespeare adds a dimension to the soliloquy, by using it not only as a means for Hamlet to reveal his mind to the audience, but also as a necessary hedge behind which Hamlet hides his real intention even from this very audience. Through his soliloquy Hamlet guides our expectation to a certain kind of action, but he does something totally opposite for which we are not ready. Thus, he uses the soliloquy both as a revealing mode and as a deceptive device. Therefore, it may also be noticed that his soliloquies sometimes have very little bearing on the actions contemplated and subsequently executed, though structurally speaking there is an overall inherence of all his soliloquies. They never come at odd places, but rather at the places where and when the audience are ready for one. His soliloquies are as different from each other in tone and style as he is from scene to scene. Hamlet's various moods are well-represented through his soliloquies.

We will now begin a discussion of the seven soliloquies, noting that the famous "To be or not to be" soliloquy appears as the centrepiece of the play. The action rises to a crescendo in this soliloquy, and afterwards declines, winding up with the death of Hamlet.

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[1] See Wolfgang Clemen, *Shakespeare's Soliloquies*, tr. Charity Scott Stokes, (Methuen, 1987), p. 201, 26n. The text which we are following, i.e., *The Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, eds. Stanley Wells et el does not include the last soliloquy (4.4.23 ff: "How all occasions do inform against me") as its editors decide that in order to preserve the authenticity they should stick to the Folio edition which does not include the passage, but they have printed it in the 'additional passages', p. 689.

The first soliloquy: 1.2.129-59:

O that this too too solid[2] flesh would melt,
Thaw, and resolve itself into a dew,
Or that the Everlasting had not fixed
His canon 'gainst self-slaughter! O God, O God,
How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable
Seem to me all the uses of this world!
Fie on't, ah fie, fie! 'Tis an unweeded garden
That grows to seed; things rank and gross in nature
Possess it merely. That it should come to this-
But two months dead - nay, not so much, not two-
So excellent a king, that was to this
Hyperion to a satyr, so loving to my mother
That he might not beteem the winds of heaven
Visit her face too roughly! Heaven and earth,
Must I remember? Why, she would hang on him
As if increase of appetite had grown
By what it fed on, and yet within a month-
Let me not think on't; frailty, thy name is woman-

[2] The debate on this word and its homonym 'sullied' is significant. We only refer to two modern editors taking opposite stands to show the intensity of the debate.

Harold Jenkins, ed. *Hamlet* (The Arden Shakespeare, 1982) preserves 'sullied' (p.187), which is Wilson's improvement of the word 'sallied' in *Q2* and *Q1*. He convincingly argues that the "suggestion of contamination and self-disgust" (p. 437) is indicated more by this word than by 'solid'. He, however, agrees that Shakespeare may have intended a pun on both words: "The possibility of an intended play on both words cannot be ruled out; but what happens perhaps is that by a natural process the word *(sullied)* which gives at once the clue to the emotion which the soliloquy will express, brings to mind its near-homonym (*solid*), which helps to promote the imagery of *melt, thaw, resolve, dew*." (pp. 437-8)

Philip Edwards, ed. *Hamlet: Prince of Denmark* (The New Cambridge Shakespeare, 1985), on the other hand remarks: "The case for 'sullied' is tortuous, though it is the reading of most modern editions. The case for 'solid' is simple. It is the unequivocal reading of one of the two authoritative texts, and it suits the context much better. Hamlet's lament is that his flesh is too solid to melt away, and that he is forbidden by God to do away with himself. In the context of the speech, it would hardly be surprising if Shakespeare heard the word 'sullied' as he wrote 'solid' and that the reporter caught only the unexpressed part of the pun." (p. 88)

A little month, or ere those shoes were old
With which she followed my poor father's body,
Like Niobe, all tears, why she, even she-
God, a beast that wants discourse of reason
Would have mourned longer! - married with mine uncle,
My father's brother, but not more like my father
Than I to Hercules; within a month
Ere yet the salt of most unrighteous tears
Had left the flushing of her galle'd eyes,
She married. O most wicked speed, to post
With such dexterity to incestuous sheets!
It is not, nor it cannot come to good.
But break, my heart, for I must hold my tongue. (1.2.129-159)

The location of the soliloquy is structurally effective, because just a little while ago Claudius had occupied the stage, and with all his suavity and polish seemed to have executed the affairs of the state quite well, while Hamlet remained in the background wearing black and playing upon the word 'seems'. The Queen first uses the word at line 75 ("Why seems it so particular with thee?") and Hamlet puns on it in the next line ("Seems, Madam? Nay, it is. I know not 'seems'."), which is an early indication of Hamlet's fondness for word-play. The low-tone intimacy[3], which marks his conversation with his mother, is also suggestive of his need to seek the audience's support on his side. On the other hand this very hushed voice arouses a feeling of restlessness in his mother, and his first line in the court scene (1.2.) is again an example of explosive pun shattering his mother's peace of mind: "A little more than kin and less than kind" (1.2.65)). And, technically speaking, Hamlet has to have time alone to counter the suave impression of his uncle by presenting a portrait of his own father to the audience, which, since he is not aware of the Ghost as yet, gains in effect as it glorifies the earlier Hamlet against Claudius, thus giving out a relief of the contrastive dimensions between the two brothers.

[3] J. L. Styan, *Shakespearean Stagecraft* (Cambridge, 1967), p. 74.

The soliloquy itself, however, is a little anti-climactic, because, as noted by Clemen, Hamlet makes no mention of the fact of usurpation by his uncle, nor does he seem to be concerned with the question of inheritance[4], but he rather engages the whole soliloquy in expressing his love for his father and fuming over his mother's remarriage. The soliloquy is again liable to give birth to a complicated critical response as Marylin French's who, citing the single phrase being made about Hamlet Senior's death in this speech ('But, two months dead' (1.2.138)), argues that "It is not his father's death that has shaken him."[5] The critical consensus that Hamlet's rage against his mother outweighs his grief for his father is spearheaded by Eliot who faults *Hamlet*, and, in the process forming his theory of objective correlative, says that while the play demands of Hamlet to feel hatred against his uncle, he feels so rather against his mother, thus misappropriating the intended passion assigned him by the author.

> The artistic "inevitability" lies in this complete adequacy of the external to the emotion; and this is precisely what is deficient in *Hamlet*. Hamlet (the man) is dominated by an emotion which is inexpressible, because it is in *excess* of the facts as they appear. . . .
>
> Hamlet is up against the difficulty that his disgust is occasioned by his mother, but that his mother is not an adequate equivalent for it; his disgust envelopes and exceeds her. It is thus a feeling which he cannot understand; he cannot objectify it, and it therefore remains to poison life and obstruct action.[6]

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[4] Clemen, p.128.

[5] Marylin French, "Chaste Constancy in 'Hamlet'," in Martin Coyle, ed. *Hamlet, New Casebooks, Contemporary Critical Essays* (MacMillan Education Ltd., 1992), pp. 98-99.

[6] T. S. Eliot, "Hamlet and His Problems," in David Bevington, ed. *Twentieth Century Interpretations of* Hamlet, (Prentice-Hall Inc., 1968), p. 25. Eliot defines "Objective correlative" thus: "The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an 'objective correlative'; in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that *particular* emotion; such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked." Page 25.

Jenkins, however, thinks that Eliot misjudges Hamlet's grief, and wrongly traces it to have been caused by his mother's remarriage. He thinks that the cause of Hamlet's plight at this point spreads beyond his mother, and that it is in a wider moral context that his grief is to be considered.

> The surprise is not that her son should long to be free of his 'sullied flesh', but that Eliot, a poet so responsive to imagery and myth, should think of Hamlet's grief excessive for what is here suggested. With the bad man in possession of queen and kingdom, Hamlet's plight extends to the whole 'state of Denmark', where what is 'rotten', we may say, is that the god in man has succumbed to the beast. . . .
>
> Hamlet's task, when placed in the widest moral context, is not simply to kill his father's killer but by doing so to rid the world of the satyr and restore it to Hyperion.[7]

As it can be seen, Jenkins's moral premise has only been well-anticipated by Bradley (though Bradley himself is unwilling to accept Hamlet's dilemma to have had anything to do with morality) when he says that in spite of the imposed mandate of revenge, Hamlet's deepest wish is to salvage the soul of his mother.

> His chief desire is not by any means to ensure his mother's silent acquiescence in his design of revenge; it is to save her soul. . . .
>
> The truth is that, though Hamlet hates his uncle and acknowledges the duty of vengeance, his whole heart is never in this feeling or this task; but his whole heart is in his horror at his mother's fall and in his longing to raise her.[8]

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[7] Jenkins, pp. 130 -31.

[8] A. C. Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy* (MacMillan, rpt. Pocket Papermacs, 1971), p. 110.

Eliot is surely perceptive in his reading of the play, because when this present soliloquy is contemplated, what can be seen is that Hamlet is shocked to realise that his mother's decision to marry again rises from bodily desire. Thus, the basis of the argument here is that the body gives rise to carnal longing, and in Hamlet's case, the grief caused by this realisation is overpowering, because he has seen it evident in his own mother. And so the body should be allowed to perish, either through its own decaying process or through suicide.

The despising of his mother wells up so strongly in him because she has violated the marriage vow, the importance of which, as Juliet McLauchlan suggests, is recognised by Montaigne in the 'way up' ideal of life.[9] Hamlet himself abuses her for breaking the marriage vow. Thus McLauchlan argues that when the Ghost complains: "O Hamlet, what a falling off was there!" (1.5.47) the "pain and grief" on his face "lift [him] above the vaunting of an unworthy and complacent husband or the whinings of a cuckold."[10] Hamlet, therefore, shows the intensest repulsion at his mother's remarriage. The shock is unbearable, so McLauchlan writes:

> The significance of this is that Hamlet's ideal of his father, and thus of man, seems to have been based upon his ideal view of his parents' marriage; his deep illusionment with man and with life springs *primarily* from the shock to this ideal. Hamlet rightly sees an ugly degeneration from love to lust in Gertrude's second marriage, and it is certainly this, rather than the political disruption of Denmark, which disturbs Hamlet most and rouses his most passionate outbursts.[11]

The debate between the words 'solid' and 'sullied' has already been noted in the footnotes, and here Jenkins's view that they are close homonyms, one leading to the other, can be supported. From the first line Hamlet here speaks in a generative sense,

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[9] Juliet McLauchlan, "The Prince of Denmark and Claudius's Court," in Kenneth Muir & Stanley Wells, ed. *Aspects of Hamlet* (Cambridge University Press, 1979, Rpt. 1980), p. 56.
[10] McLauchlan, p. 56.
[11] McLauchlan, p. 57.

because he wants the dissolution of his own solid flesh thinking that it is subject to the same kind of defilement as his mother's. Though his mother is not mentioned, what she has done has been corroding Hamlet's heart, and presently she is in the back of his mind while he is making this speech. The death wish, however, is immediately checked, as he reminds himself of the biblical "canon 'gainst self-slaughter" (1.2.132), which seems to have occurred to Shakespeare probably from his knowledge of the sixth commandment, *Thou shalt not kill*, applying *a fortiori* to murder of oneself.[12] In the next few lines he shows his disgust using four poignant adjectives *weary, stale, flat,* and *unprofitable* that crowd up in the image of the *unweeded garden that grows to seed*, explaining, as Clemen says, not only his death wish, but also that Hamlet is resigning himself from the world.[13] And, the clause, "things rank and gross in nature / Possess it merely" (1.2.136-37), indicates that Hamlet is seeing nothing worth living for on this earth after the departing of his father. The death of his father compounded with the remarriage of his mother has created an oxymoron-type situation for him between 'mourning' and 'wedding', or, as Hamlet later says, "The funeral bak'd meats / Did coldly furnish forth the marriage tables" (1.2.180-81), and the outcome is his wish for suicide. From line 137 onwards Hamlet goes into the ravings regarding the cause that has upset him. He, feeling horribly aghast, now ejaculates, "That it should come to this - ." Then as the memory of his loving mother fleetingly comes to him, soon to be followed by the opposite kind of event involving her remarriage, his emotions get jumbled up, and he starts speaking in a series of broken syntaxes. About this state of his mind Clemen forwards a deep psychological reason:

> Long before it was discovered by modern psychology, Shakespeare knew that in an over-sensitive person close to despair the impressions and feelings that have not been worked through and assimilated erupt into consciousness, resulting not in cohesive thought or in the ability to

[12] See Jenkins, p. 187, and Edwards, p. 88.
[13] Clemen, p. 129.

> discriminate between more and less important matters, but in a kaleidoscopic mingling of overpowering and volatile emotions.[14]

With "So excellent a king, that was to this / Hyperion to a satyr" (1.2.139-40), Hamlet introduces the comparison between the brother-kings which will continue to be the *leitmotif* until it reaches the culminating point in the-bed-chamber scene (3.4). Critics are well in agreement about the use of the two contrary portraits of the brothers as representing the different natures of the two brothers as well as describing a general view that in human nature both an angel and a beast quite often coexist. And that this dichotomy in human nature is one of the standard ideological praxes of Renaissance Europe can also be readily agreed upon, as Jenkins, out of many references to this idea, refers to Pico della Mirandola who, in explaining the dual nature of man, says that the lower self of man can be improved by proper application of reason: "Neither heavenly nor earthly . . . thou canst grow downward into the lower natures which are brutes. Thou canst again grow upward from thy soul's reason into the higher natures which are divine."[15]

Structurally, therefore, the soliloquy, as Jenkins considers, "effects a link between the presentation of one king in the preceding part of the scene and the description of the other in the dialogue which follows"[16] in 3.4.55-62. As Hamlet recalls how lovingly his father used to adore his mother so that even the rough winds were not allowed to brush her cheeks, a little biography of his own is also revealed, as it can be assumed from Hamlet's age (30 years or so)[17] that he was born when his parents were a young couple, and that he had been an innocent child-witness to many of the intimate moments between them. What makes Hamlet completely puzzled is how such an adoring wife could change

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[14] Clemen, p. 130.
[15] Jenkins, p. 438.
[16] Jenkins, p. 438.
[17] The question about Hamlet's age has fretted the critics for long. But, depending on the gravedigger's reference, as Barbara Everett does in her book, *Young Hamlet* (Clarendon Paperback, Oxford, rpt 1992), p. 17, we would like to confirm that Hamlet is thirty years old. The gravedigger's speech is the following: " I came to't that day that our last King Hamlet o'ercame Fortinbras . . . It was the very day that young Hamlet was born - he that was mad, and sent into England . . . I have been sexton here, man and boy thirty years. (5.1.140-158)

her mind in such a short time to accept somebody as her husband who is inferior in every respect to her past husband! Surprised, he speaks out in forceful phrases to magnify her indecent haste ("yet within a month" (1.2.145)) in choosing a second husband. He complains in such terms -- "why she, even she" (1.2.149) who followed the hearse in all tears like Niobe, the stains of which are still to be seen on her cheeks, and while her shoes in which she followed the hearse are not yet worn old – that, Clemen suggests, become "unforgettable emblems of the brevity of her mourning,"[18] The comment, "... frailty thy name is woman" (1.2.146), thus appears not as a traditional male invective against woman (though most critics hold that it does), but as an instance where Shakespeare is making his hero apply a general statement to a particular case. Here the line suggests that women are the weaker sex, but more importantly it suggests the shortness of Hamlet's mother's memory. He holds his mother as a particularised phenomenon, and thinks that she lacks the reason which even is to be found in a beast. And the syntax is again broken, before he bursts into another spasm of utterance - "married with my uncle, / My father's brother" (1.2.151-52)! He then uses another classical figure, Hercules, for his father, thus sharpening the contrast between his father and his uncle, though such a vast difference does not seem to have affected his mother's choice who "within a month" (1.2.153) (again Hamlet for the fourth time[19] refers to the *brief* time span she has taken) has rushed to the nuptial bed for the second time. The words used appropriately indicate his mother's haste: "O most *wicked speed*, to *post* / With such *dexterity* to incestuous sheets" (Italics mine) (1.2.154-55)! The short-lived mourning is harrowing him, but the question whether his mother had sexual relation with his uncle before the murder took place is difficult to determine, as the Ghost's version relayed to Hamlet in Act 1, Scene 5, where he refers to Claudius's power to seduce, leaves only a tentative suggestion that she might: " . . . that incestuous . . . adulterate beast . . . / . . . that have the power / So to seduce! - won to his shameful lust / The will of my most seeming -virtuous queen" (1.5.42-46). The other question whether he would be able to digest his mother's remarriage if she were to do it after a reasonable time is spent

[18] Clemen, p. 131.
[19] Clemen, p. 131.

is also answered in the negative as the idea of incest "formerly included the union of a woman with her husband's brother."[20] Hamlet speaks about a normative value in the last but one line - "It is not, nor it cannot come to good" (1.2.158), saying that such flagrant violation of conduct will not bear fruits. What harrows Hamlet is more than a remarriage, it is the *speed* with which she (Gertrude) has flown to Claudius's bed that has shocked Hamlet. Thus Gertrude has violated the idea of the female chaste constancy. French, therefore, argues, in a way similar to Eliot's, that "because of the importance of chaste constancy in *Hamlet*, the intellectual level (plot) of the play conflicts with the emotional level (design)." She further says that he "arranges for the play to catch the conscience of the King . . . ; but that conscience, which is moved to prayer (or its attempt), seems of little interest to him once it is caught. It is rather the conscience of the Queen that Hamlet is fishing for."[21] The last line, "But break, my heart, for I must hold my tongue" (1.2.159), is the traditional way of concluding a soliloquy, but it also provides a key to Hamlet's future behaviour. He is going to be incommunicative in public, and only except for Horatio, he will remain ambivalent to most of the others he will talk to. This line also anticipates the antic disposition he will wear.

The soliloquy is strangely prophetic in the sense that Hamlet does not know anything of the murder as yet, but his reactions toward the remarriage include his attitude to his uncle which will not be fundamentally different from what he will bear toward him as a fratricide. The speech is formally dealing with incest, but the image of murder which this incest has caused is also lurking beneath the surface, though the protagonist is still unaware of this. So, the situation is not only that Hamlet sees - before he knows anything about the murder - a godlike man dead and substituted by the beastlike, nor is it that he shockingly discovers his own mother to have ceased mourning for the Hyperion-figure and consorted with the satyr-brother, but that, as Edwards suggests, his "indignation does indeed go deeper than the 'facts'."[22]

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[20] Jenkins, p. 189.
[21] French, pp. 106 &107.

[22] Edwards, p. 41.

Hamlet Senior and Claudius are, as Maynard Mack notes, one pair of the ten brother-pairs in Shakespeare, seven pairs of which appear in his tragedies. All seven of them are "divided as the archetypal brothers in the Scripture, Cain and Abel."[23] Edwards counts three occasions when Cain and Abel are mentioned in the play: 'the first corse' (1.2.); 'the primal eldest curse . . . A brother's murder' (3.3); and 'Cain's jawbone, that did the first murder' (3.3).[24] When one brother destroys another, according to Jenkins, "their kinship adds to murder something 'most foul, strange and unnatural'."[25] This unnaturality leads to Hamlet's all-pervasive disgust with the world against which, his uncle's usurpation, and his mother's hasty marriage seem insufficient facts, and, therefore, as Edwards explains, the root for Hamlet's despair has a primordial origin in such examples as the feud between Abel and Cain, or in the transmitted moral version of the same story where brothers feud over things which cannot be shared: a throne, a woman. And, all the distinctions then get blurred - the satyr is confused with the Hyperion. Edwards writes:

> The story of Cain and Abel is brought into the play during this scene (105) and appears again twice (3.3.38 and 5.1.65). That first murder shattered the human family; it resulted from and betokened man's falling away from God. The identification of Claudius with Cain - which he himself makes - gives us the context in which we should put the 'unreasonable' bitterness of Hamlet, though as yet he knows nothing about any murder. In his book *Violence and the Sacred*, Ren'e Girard argued that cultural breakdown in early society, what he terms the 'sacrificial crisis', involves the failure to recognise acknowledged distinctions and differences. The erasure of difference shows itself in myth in the mortal rivalry of two brothers for what cannot be shared, a throne, a woman. Girard quotes the 'degree' speech in Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* as an inspired perception of

[23] Maynard Mack, "Rescuing Shakespeare" (1979) in John Russell Brown, ed., *Studying Shakespeare* (A Casebook, MacMillan, 1996), pp. 71-2.
[24] Philip Edwards, "Tragic Balance in 'Hamlet'," in *Shakespeare Survey 36* (1983), p. 48.
[25] Jenkins, p. 129.

> the chaos and violence which flow from the weakening of accepted distinctions. If, instead of the reading 'each thing meets in mere oppugnancy', he had followed the quarto text with 'each thing *melts* in mere oppugnancy', he would have shown how even more forcefully the passage conveys the rooted fear of the loss of category, of identity, of distinctiveness.
>
> The obliteration of distinction, before Hamlet knows anything about fratricide or adultery, lies in Claudius taking his brother's place as king and husband and in Gertrude tranquilly accepting him as substitute.[26]

The 'obliteration of distinction' is also the cause Edwards thinks to be worrying Hamlet. He despises his mother for not being able to "distinguish between the two brothers, between Cain and Abel. 'Look here upon this picture, and on this!'"[27]

This is so far so good. But one cannot remove this inkling of doubt from one's heart that why should Gertrude become faithless. How was the Hamlet Senior as a husband? Successful in bed or not, a likeable personality or not! A biological prying can start here. If we assume Hamlet to be 30 years old, his father might have been, at the time of his death, in the mid-fifties at the least, - an age well past the prime time. And, if Gertrude had been married young, say 15, and Hamlet was born in the first year of their marriage, she might be around 45, an age when most women go through the state of menopause. During this time women go through a restless phase both in health and mind. It is at this time that married women look for contact outside marriage. But royal men and women because of their healthy diets and better living conditions may be supposed to remain virile even past 50. What may have caused Gertrude to go for the second marriage cannot be singled out, as more than one cause may have combined. Even her sense of insecurity at the death of her husband may have prompted her to marry Claudius, who has become a king already. Whatever it may be, Hamlet's straightforward blaming of his mother, while

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[26] Edwards, pp. 41-42.
[27] Edwards, pp. 48-49.

elevating his father to an angelic status, may seem unaccounted for, and not only that, one by taking a feminist approach can, as does Copp˙elia Kahn, call the Ghost a cuckold. Kahn further thinks that since *Hamlet* is a patriarchal text, so the blame for the remarriage goes to Gertrude.

> Viewed in this context, Hamlet's well-known misogyny and preoccupation with Gertrude's faults are an outlet for the rage mingled with shame he feels at his father's situation. He must bury or disguise his awareness of it, because to admit it would damage severely his idealized image of that father. So long as he can blame a woman's frailty for the indignity his father suffers, as the conventions of cuckoldry enables him to do, that image can be saved.[28]

The first soliloquy has opened a multi-faceted Hamlet to us. From the common Elizabethan revenge heroes typified by the great actor, Edward Alleyn (the 'stalking Tamburlaine'[29]), Hamlet introduces the different category of protagonists - reflective and low-toned - of which Richard Burbage was the frontline actor.[30] The speech has given us an access into Hamlet's mind, which is informed with the intellectual milieu of the day, with the far more delicate problem of defining the physical passion as distinctly segregated from the bond of love.

The Second Soliloquy occurs after Hamlet has encountered the Ghost, which has told him the whole story of the murder, conjoined on him the duty of revenge, and warned him not to take any action against his mother. So, in this soliloquy Hamlet sounds both agitated and bewildered. The soliloquy begins the whole question about believing a

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[28] Copp˙elia Kahn, *Masculine Identity in Shakespeare* (Berkeley, Califf., 1981). Quoted by Michael Hattaway in *Hamlet*: An Introduction to the Variety of Criticism (The Critical Debate Series). (MacMillan, 1987), p. 133.

[29] Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage, 1574-1642* (Cambridge University Press, rpt. 1987), p. 88.

[30] Gurr, pp. 85-89.

Ghost or not. Apart from this, it also founds the bond between father and son, despite the doubt.

The 2nd Soliloquy: 1.5.92-113:

O all you host of heaven! O earth! What else?
And shall I couple hell? O fie! Hold, hold, my heart,
And you, my sinews, grow not instant old,
But bear me stiffly up. Remember thee?
Ay, thou poor ghost, while memory holds a seat
In this distracted globe. Remember thee?
Yea, from the table of my memory
I'll wipe away all trivial fond records,
All saws of books, all forms, all pressures past,
And they commandment all alone shall live
Within the book and volume of my brain
Unmixed with baser matter. Yes, yes, by heaven.
O most pernicious woman!
O villain, villain, smiling, damne'd villain!
My tables,
My tables - meet it is I set it down
That one may smile and smile and be a villain.
At least I'm sure it may be so in Denmark. [He writes]
So, uncle, there you are. Now to my word:
It is 'Adieu, adieu, remember me'.
I have sworn't.

The soliloquy comes after Hamlet has the conversation with the Ghost, and has the whole story retold by the latter with vivid description of the circumstances of his death. The Ghost has conjoined him on an act of revenge, the first utterance of the word coming

at line 7: "So art thou to revenge when thou shalt hear" (1.5). The mandate is reinforced at line 25: "Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder." And the Ghost is unambiguous in placing the command on Hamlet: "I find thee apt, / And duller shouldst thou be than the fat weed / That rots itself in ease on Lethe wharf / Wouldst thou not stir in this" (1.5.31-34). Why the Ghost is so insistent about revenge would be taken up at the time of discussing the "To be, or not to be" soliloquy which demands a complete exegesis on revenge and its implications, but here, with Jenkins, we note that the Ghost's admonition to Hamlet not to be dull (that is, slow) in his duty ironically anticipates "Hamlet's own use of 'dull' in his self-accusations of inactivity (2.2.562, 4.4.33)."[31]

Hamlet's reference to hell at the 2nd line makes Edwards comment that the "enormity of what he has heard [from the Ghost] makes Hamlet appeal first to heaven to witness, then turn to earth as the scene of these crimes, and finally to hell as their source."[32] Jenkins on the other hand thinks that Hamlet is still in doubt about the Ghost's provenance: "Uncertainty about the Ghost's provenance (cf. 1.4.40-1), quieted during its presence, returns when it is gone. Hamlet does not ignore that that to which he now pledges himself may embrace both good and evil."[33] The exit line of the Ghost is "Remember me" (1.5.91), and now Hamlet repeats it to announce his vow that as long as his head ("this distracted globe," 1.5.96) holds memory, he will remember him. The question of verifying the Ghost's true nature is not rising in his mind right now. It will occur on a future occasion. He wholeheartedly pledges here that he will remove all other trivial pre-occupations from his memory, and will remain singly concerned with the task of avenging his father's murder. Only the Ghost's "commandment all alone shall live" (1.5.102) in his memory. Then he writes down the proverbial line: "That one may smile and smile and be a villain" (1.5.109) about which Edwards reports what Coleridge wrote: Hamlet, having vowed " 'to make his memory a blank of all maxims and generalised truths', immediately notes down this 'generalised fact'."[34] Edwards further notes this line to be another good theatrical example of Shakespeare's application of a general truth to a

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[31] Jenkins, p. 455.
[32] Edwards, p. 109.
[33] Jenkins, p. 221.
[34] Edwards, p. 110.

particular situation with a new light: "Hamlet's point, I take it, is that *this* truth is one he has discovered for himself; it's the first of the new entries. The general truth is immediately qualified by the certificate of the personal experience: 'At least I am sure it may be so in Denmark.'"[35]

This soliloquy is relatively less profound than Hamlet's other soliloquies. It has its importance, however, recognised in the structure of the play. Hamlet has already shown himself uncannily aware that something is rotten in the state of Denmark, and that his father might have died mysteriously. Though Hamlet is surprised at the revelation of the fact of murder by the Ghost ("Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder," and, in response, a surprised Hamlet repeats the last word: "Murder!" (1.5.25-6)) he seems to have accepted the Ghost, so far as the present soliloquy indicates, as a positive one, as the apparition of his own father. The relationship is one of affection.

The 3rd Soliloquy: 2.2.551-607:

Now I am alone.
O, what a rogue and peasant slave am I!
Is it not monstrous that this player here,
But in a fiction, in a dream of passion,
Could force his soul so to his whole conceit
That from her working all his visage wanned,
Tears in his eyes, distraction in 's aspect,
A broken voice, and his whole function suiting
With forms to his conceit? And all for nothing.
For Hecuba!
What's Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba,
That he should weep for her? What would he do
Had he the motive and the cue for passion

[35] Edwards, p. 110.

That I have? He would drown the stage with tears,
And cleave the general ear with horrid speech,
Make mad the guilty and appal the free,
Confound the ignorant, and amaze indeed
The very faculty of eyes and ears. Yet I,
A dull and muddy-mettled rascal, peak
Like John-a-dreams, unpregnant of my cause,
And can say nothing-no, not for a king
Upon whose property and most dear life
A damned defeat was made. Am I a coward?
Who calls me villain, breaks my pate across,
Plucks off my beard and blows it in my face,
Tweaks me by th'nose, gives me the lie i'th'throat
As deep as to the lungs? Who does me this?
Ha? 'Swounds, I should take it; for it cannot be
But I am pigeon-livered and lack gall
To make oppression bitter, or ere this
I should 'a'fatted all the region kites
With this slave's offal. Bloody, bawdy villain!
Remorseless, treacherous, lecherous, kindless villain!
O, vengeance!-
Why, what an ass am I? Ay, sure, this is most brave,
That I, the son of the dear murder'ed,
Prompted to my revenge by heaven and hell,
Must, like a whore, unpack my heart with words
And fall a-cursing like a very drab,
A scullion! Fie upon't, foh!- About, my brain.
I have heard that guilty creatures sitting at a play
Have by the very cunning of the scene
Been struck so to the soul that presently

They have proclaimed their malefactions;
For murder, though it have no tongue, will speak
With most miraculous organ. I'll have these players
Play something like the murder of my father
Before mine uncle. I'll observe his looks,
I'll tent him to the quick. If a but blench,
I know my course. The spirit that I have seen
May be the devil, and the devil hath power
T'assume a pleasing shape; yea, and perhaps,
Out of my weakness and my melancholy-
As he is very potent with such spirits-
Abuses me to damn me. I'll have grounds
More relative than this. The play's the thing
Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the King.

This soliloquy is responsible for the ideas that Hamlet procrastinates, that Hamlet is only big in mouth but little in action, and that perhaps Hamlet is a coward. If this soliloquy were not there, probably Hamlet would not have been charged with the above accusations. We will take up the question of delay on a laster occasion, but here we just refer to a few facts to validate the idea that the sense of procrastination only emerges when Hamlet sees people performing their respective duties, as against his inability to act. In the present situation he is impressed by the Player's way of delivering the Hecuba speech, and he thinks, with a genuine grievance, he cannot yet emulate him. In "How all occasions do inform against me" soliloquy (4.4.23-57), he wonders when twenty thousand soldiers can sacrifice their lives just for 'an eggshell' (44) and for a 'trick of fame' (52), he on the other hand having "cause, and will, and strength, and means / To do it" (35-6), does nothing. The emulative design reaches the climax in the graveyard scene (5.1). Laertes jumps into Ophelia's grave and asks for the chunks of earth to be poured on him so that he is buried alive with his dead sister. Hamlet, who is present on the graveside in disguise, feels an instant thrust of emulation and jumps into the grave

himself, and soon as Laertes dashes at him, he, declaring that "Forty thousand brothers / Could not ... sum up" (5.1.266 - 68) his love for Ophelia, further taunts him.[36]

> . . . Dost thou come here to whine,
>
> To outface me with leaping in her grave?
>
> Be buried quick with her, and so will I.
>
> And if thou prate of mountains, let them throw
>
> Millions of acres on us. (5.1.274-78)

And, easily to be noted is that Hamlet self-reproaches only in soliloquies, and not in conversation with Horatio or others. What is the explanation? Neville Coghill suggests that Shakespeare knew what the audience expected of a 'revenger' - violence and cunning, but had seen Hamlet doing neither in the long Second Act. "So," Coghill continues, "in this soliloquy he gave them both, beginning with a violence of self-reproach for 'delay' that anticipates and prevents what any audience might feel towards him. It is a superb piece of audience-craft."[37] The soliloquy comes in reaction to the First Player's superb rendering of an episode from the Greek tragedy concerned with Priam's death. When the visiting company of tragedians arrived at the palace, Hamlet was so much elated unusual for a man in mourning. He asked the Player to give him the speech, and himself recited some part of it. In pointing out the justified location of the soliloquy, Neville Coghill finds a twofold purpose of the recitation of the play-passage by both the Player and Hamlet. It shows on the one hand Hamlet's capacity to get himself immersed in something apparently very trivial to his more serious call of business, and on the other the difference between an amateur, like Hamlet, and the professional Player. So, when the Player reproduces the speech in his well-trained professional skills, matching his voice and gestures in the most effective way, we are made to understand that this Player

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[36] The critics debate about the location of the scuffle between Hamlet and Laertes. Some say that it takes place above the grave, some say that inside it. We have taken the later view as more appropriate

[37] Neville Coghill, *Shakespeare's Professional Skills*, p. 158.

will have some use for Hamlet in future, though what it is neither we nor Hamlet himself can guess.[38] Hamlet wonders when the Player can weep such genuinely acting as Hecuba ("For Hecuba! / What's Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba, / That he should weep for her?" 2.2.560-1)), then why he cannot do more than that! Though Bradley in general seems to stress the point too much when he takes Hamlet's words about inaction literally, and says that this arises from a melancholic disposition, he is right in thinking that the Player has confronted him with a challenge for action: "The emotion shown by the player in reciting the speech which tells of Hecuba's grief for her slaughtered husband awakes into burning life the slumbering sense of duty and shame. He must act."[39] Hamlet ponders, what would he (the Player) have done, if he had had a cause like him! He would have made a most spectacular rendering of his grief drowning the stage with tears, breaking his voice, and putting everybody's eyes and ears to the extremity of their respective functions. And then the comparison begins: "Yet I . . ." (2.2.568 ff). He calls himself a "dull and muddy-mettled rascal" (2.2.570), who cannot or is not doing anything for a father on whose "property and most dear life / A damn defeat was made" (2.2.572-3). The question he then puts to himself is a clue to understand his psychology: "Am I a coward" (2.2.573)? This is perhaps a basic question on which debates can go on. When is a man coward? How is he a coward? Can a man be a coward by nature, as some men can be brave by nature? Or, is a man a coward in some situations but not so in other respects? And, what about Hamlet himself? When he feels himself to be a coward, do we also feel the same about him?

Let us now look at how Hamlet self-reproaches. He thinks that his scalp has been broken, and his beard has been plucked and blown before his eyes, and he is being jerked by the nose, and is given the lie to digest deep, and all this is possible because he is being "pigeon-livered and lack[s] gall" (2.2.579). He fears his chicken-heartedness is turning him into a villain. And, what are the criteria of a villain (in the sense of a revenger)? Hamlet defines that a villain has to be "Bloody, . . . / Remorseless, treacherous,

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[38] Coghill, p. 157.

[39] Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy*, p. 104.

lecherous, [and] kindless" (2.2.582-84) which fit his uncle so well that one believes Hamlet has him in mind while thinking about a villain. Then he utters, "O, vengeance" (2.2.584)! This indicates how extremely he feels himself burdened with the mandate of revenge. Edwards thinks that this "short line and the silence after it are the pivot of the speech."[40]

Then the second phase of his self-castigation begins. He considers himself an ass, because his self "a-cursing" (2.2.589) sounds like the cursing of a whore. And then he can continue no more and, in extreme exasperation, clutches his head in pain. His mental agony begins to affect his physique.

Then the soliloquy from line 591 shifts on to a new premise. He strikes upon the idea of staging a playlet to find out the guilty. Not altogether a new premise, because the moment he is left alone he starts the soliloquy as if to unburden his heart of what has been taking shape in him after his encounter with the Player King. That the Player can trigger in him such an idea is understandable as Hamlet certainly is referring to such a convention, that is, the practice of holding plays for royal entertainment. Hieronimo stages a playlet in *The Spanish tragedy*. He has heard that guilty creatures sitting at a play have often been induced to confess to their 'malefactions'(2.2.594) when identical crime scenarios are reproduced. The rest of the soliloquy describes his planning. The players will be used to stage a drama in which Hamlet will graft a scene exactly reproducing the murder of his father, and invite his uncle to watch it. And "If a [he - his uncle] but blench [flinch], / I know my course" (2.2.599-600). His logic is also clear. The testimony given by the Ghost cannot be yet ascertained as true, so by believing it he may be treading upon a dangerous path. Though the Elizabethans generally believed the ghosts either to be true or false, but there was a widespread scepticism regarding the symbolic dimension of a Ghost, and the idea that it could be the source of communion with a higher world was often considered, as Edwards says, with 'a sense of treacherousness'.[41] So Hamlet needs an 'ocular proof' to guarantee himself that the spirit does not mean to abuse him to

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[40] Edwards, p. 142.
[41] Edwards, "Tragic Balance in 'Hamlet'," in *Shakespeare Survey 36*, (1983), pp. 43-52.

damnation. So, he needs "grounds / More relative than" (2.2.605-6) the Ghost, in order to convince himself that his uncle is the actual murderer. This is quite in order with the tradition of the ghosts in revenge plays because, as Catherine Belsey says, they "consistently resist unequivocal identifications, are always 'questionable' in one of the senses of that word."[42] And, the playlet, the "most miraculous organ" (2.2.596), is going to be "the thing / Wherein I'll [he will] catch the conscience of the King" (2.2.606-7). Later on, he says to Horatio, "If his [his uncle's] occulted guilt / Do not itself unkennel in one speech, / It is a damn'ed ghost that we have seen" (3.2.78-80).

About Hamlet's attitude towards the Ghost, Clifford Leech points out that the critical tradition owes it to John Dover Wilson who first insisted in his book, *What Happens in Hamlet* (1935), that the Ghost constituted a problem for Hamlet; and, in fact, as Leech reports, "Hamlet was the first character in an Elizabethan drama to doubt a ghost's veracity: the dramatic tradition, untroubled by religious controversy, used ghosts as a convenient means of bringing news."[43] Eleanor Prosser, whose well-done research into the Elizabethan attitudes towards revenge we will take up at a later stage, asserts that Hamlet's doubt about the Ghost should not be taken lightly, because there was verifiable resistance toward heeding a Ghost at the time. And, she further considers that Hamlet's moral dilemma toward revenge is due partly to the dubious status of the Ghost, which finally results in his delay.

> One can understand why so many readers have dismissed this sudden doubt of the Ghost as a rationalization by Hamlet for some hidden reluctance. If one assumes that the Ghost has been established as a "spirit of health," and if one assumes that Hamlet was thus bound by both honor and piety to follow its command, Hamlet's self-reproaches seem warranted and his sudden doubts a flagrant evasion of the obvious. If, however, the audience has been made increasingly aware that the Ghost

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[42] Catherine Belsey, "Revenge in 'Hamlet'," Martin Coyle, ed. *Hamlet, New Casebooks, Contemporary Critical Essays* (MacMillan Education Ltd., 1992), p. 157.

[43] Clifford Leech, "Studies in *Hamlet*, 1901-1955", (SS 9, 1956), reprinted in *Aspects of* Hamlet, eds. Kenneth Muir and Stanley Wells (Cambridge University Press, 1979, rpt. 1980), pp. 7-8.

> might be a "goblin damn'd" and if it normally believes private blood revenge to be a usurpation of God's power that endangered mind, body, and soul, Hamlet's doubt becomes the healthy recognition of a very real threat. He knows, and Shakespeare's audience knew, that to follow the command of a suspect spirit might very well lead to damnation. We now learn, then, that Hamlet's reason for inaction has been a thoroughly warranted concern over a real moral issue.[44]

Thus the third soliloquy has elaborated the complexity regarding Hamlet's belief in the Ghost. Hamlet's reactions to the Ghost constitute a formal resistance toward committing homicide under whatever pretext it is urged. What is at stake here is his moral self, and this accounts for his procrastination. Can he kill on the words of a Ghost or can he not? With such profound dilemma does Hamlet approach us in the next soliloquy, that is the 4th soliloquy.

> To be, or not to be; that is the question:
> Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
> The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
> Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
> And, by opposing, end them. To die, to sleep-
> No more, and by a sleep to say we end
> The heartache and the thousand natural shocks
> That flesh is heir to-'tis a consummation
> Devoutly to be wished. To die, to sleep,
> To sleep, perchance to dream. Ay, there's the rub,
> For in that sleep of death what dreams may come
> When we have shuffled off this mortal coil

[44] Eleanor Prosser, *Hamlet and Revenge* (Stanford, 1967), p. 155. After Fredson Thayer Bowers' book, *Elizabethan Revenge Tragedy* (1940), which, however, does not discuss *Hamlet*, this is a most comprehensive study on the convention of revenge.

Must give us pause. There's the respect
That makes calamity of so long life,
For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
Th'oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,
The pangs of disprized love, the law's delay,
The insolence of office, and the spurns
That patient merit of th'unworthy takes,
When he himself might his quietus make
With a bare bodkin? What would these fardels bear,
To grunt and sweat under a weary life,
But that the dread of something after death,
The undiscovered country from whose bourn
No traveller returns, puzzles the will,
And makes us rather bear those ills we have
Than fly to others that we know not of?
Thus conscience does make cowards of us all,
And thus the native hue of resolution
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,
And enterprises of great pith and moment
With this regard their currents turn awry,
And lose the name of action. Soft you, now,
The fair Ophelia!-Nymph, in they orisons
Be all my sins remembered.

Perhaps, no amount of interpretation will ever exhaust the mystery and beauty of this soliloquy, which is the centrepiece of *Hamlet*.[45] Hamlet has already worn an antic disposition, and everybody else is put to confusion except for Claudius who thinks that it is not love for Ophelia, as is suggested by Polonius, that is gnawing at his heart, but something else, and what it is he is frantically trying to find out. This soliloquy is coming

[45] See Jenkins, pp. 484 - 490, and Clemen, pp. 133 - 141 for full exhaustive discussions of the soliloquy

just after 57 lines of the previous soliloquy, and one would expect that Hamlet would still be preoccupied with his planning of staging the play which he vowed to.[46] Nothing of that is sounded in this soliloquy, and part of the effectiveness of this soliloquy from a theatrical point of view lies, as Clemen suggests, in its lack of consequentiality and the contrast with what went on in the previous soliloquy.[47] It is so unlike other soliloquies that not only its rhythm and sound, but also its silence contribute a poignancy to the play. Clemen also notes that the great flexibility of the soliloquy does allow the actor to "direct the thoughts of the audience this way or that. . . ."[48]

'To be' means 'to exist', and 'Not to be' means 'not to exist'. Though Prosser thinks that Hamlet is debating between sufferings of life or by resolute action to end them, but her explanation of the phrases 'to be' and 'not to be', as how Plato and Aristotle meant them - *being* and *no being* - is unacceptable.[49] Calderwood, on the other hand, very ingeniously says that for Hamlet, as he goes through the pangs of obliteration of differences, 'to be' also means 'not to be', so, in the graveyard scene, Hamlet jumps into the grave in order to feel how it feels like not to be.[50] But, the speech is marked by quick but graded shifting of ideas. Thus in the first clause he is contemplating suicide, though by taking "arms against a sea of troubles" he is also implying the choice between taking action or no action. Besides, we must remember that the thought of suicide occurred to him before, but he rejected it in the First Soliloquy as there is an injunction against self-slaughter in the Bible. However, what exactly Hamlet means here has been the subject of great critical debate. Jenkins, surveying the corpus of criticism, finds that the critical disagreements mainly centre around the idea of suicide which started from Warburton, who thought of this speech as an exegesis on 'self-murder' to Malone to Bradley to Dover Wilson to Ribner (and we can also add Edwards to this group) all have taken this first line as referring to suicide, while others seem to deny that Hamlet is referring to

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[46] See Bradley, p. 105: "What is he thinking of? 'The Murder of Gonzago', which is to be played in a few hours, and on which everything depends? Not at all."

[47] Clemen, pp. 134 & 136.

[48] Clemen, p. 136.

[49] Prosser, p. 159 & 161.

[50] James L. Calderwood, "Verbal Presence: Conceptual Absence," in Martin Coyle, ed. *Hamlet, New Casebooks, Contemporary Critical Essays* (MacMillan Education Ltd, 1992), pp. 72-3.

suicide at all.[51] The second opinion, according to Jenkins, is concerned with the validity of the question inhered in 'To be or not to be'. Does Hamlet speak of an individual dilemma or a universal one? Regarding this question he summarises the main views as follows:

> (1) The 'question' of 'To be or not to be' concerns the advantages and disadvantages of human existence, the discussion of which includes the recognition of man's ability to end his existence by suicide. (2) The 'question' concerns the choice between life and death and hence focuses on suicide throughout. (3) The 'question' is whether Hamlet shall end his own life. (4) It is whether Hamlet shall kill not himself but the King. (As between 'the proposed killing of Claudius' and 'the killing of himself', Wilson Knight ultimately decides in favour of both - *The Wheel of Fire, rev. 1949, p. 304.)* (5) Still more particularly, the 'question' is not simply whether Hamlet shall pursue revenge against the King but whether he shall proceed with the actual scheme (for the performance of a play) which he has already set in motion. [52]

The debate whether Hamlet is speaking in particular or in general has arisen from the observation, as we have noted above, that the matter of the speech is out of context, or as Clemen says, "The dovetailing with the dramatic action is less apparent."[53] Further, noticing the lack of logical and syntactical cohesion of the text, Clemen argues in favour of the general premise of the speech: "His thoughts are not directed towards the here and now but towards the ultimate questions of man's existence."[54] He says that in "style and structure it is less typical of Shakespeare" in the sense that it does not involve, "sense-perceptions, self-observation or observation of the environment, anticipation of future events, purposeful planning, concrete recollections and reactions to the immediate

[51] Jenkins, p. 484., and Clemen, p. 136.
[52] Jenkins, p. 485.
[53] Clemen, p. 133.
[54] Clemen, p. 133.

past."[55] Jenkins, however, traces the liberty of the critic to apply his ingenuity in explaining the speech to Johnson's famous statement that the soliloquy 'is connected rather in the speaker's mind than on his tongue'.[56] Both Jenkins and Clemen rightly observe that the proof that Hamlet does not speak of himself can be understood by the use of the plural pronouns like 'we' and 'us'.[57] Jenkins is right in holding the view that Hamlet's speech is both particular and general.

> Unlike all Hamlet's other soliloquies this one is not concerned with this personal predicament; yet the view of life it expresses is not an impartial or objective one such as we might ascribe to Shakespeare, but just such a view as one in Hamlet's dramatic predicament might hold. It is the view of one who began the play with a sense of 'all the uses of this world' as 'weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable' (I. ii.133-4), of one who knows that his virtuous father is dead and his wicked uncle in possession of his father's queen and realm. It is a man in Hamlet's predicament who sees the world as 'an un-weeded garden' possessed by 'things rank and gross in nature' (I. ii. 135-6), who will regard the goodly earth as a 'a sterile promontory' and the majestical firmament above it as a 'pestilent congregation of vapours' (II.ii.298-303). The same vision will present the life of a man as a series of 'troubles', 'shocks,' 'fardels', 'ills' from which death - if it were only the end - would be a welcome release. This is what gives the speech, as it debates the pros and cons of human existence, its justification, and its power, in this place near the centre of the play. And although it looks beyond and never at the particular plans that Hamlet has afoot, it is not perhaps without relevance to the mood in which he now encounters Ophelia.[58]

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[55] Clemen, p. 136.
[56] Jenkins, p. 485.
[57] Jenkins, p. 486, and Clemen, p. 136.
[58] Jenkins, pp. 488-89.

Prosser thinks that Hamlet is struggling with a metaphysical issue, not an individual one. The question concerns the basic essence of man. What is nobler for man? To endure evils and leave every thing to heaven? Which one is wiser? In answer to this set of questions, Prosser discovers two voices of wisdom. One is the medieval lesson asking wisdom to be developed by fully obeying the divine law, another is the lesson from the Renaissance humanists who found that wisdom could be developed through action.[59] Trapped between these two worlds of thought, Hamlet is left with no clear choice, but a moral dilemma: "If it is nobler to act than to contemplate, if it is nobler to use natural reason than passively to await divine revelation, can it really be nobler to assent to divine injunction when every instinct of man cries 'No'?"[60] Prosser emphasises the moral dimension of Hamlet's problem: "The entire soliloquy grapples with the problem faced only by a man who believes that Heaven and Hell do exist, who believes that after death a rebel against divine law will face inevitable and terrifying judgment."[61]

What is the nobleness of life then? To die, to oppose, or to suffer? Edwards quotes Sophenhauer as saying that since no acts can improve the world, "the only argument against suicide as a praiseworthy course must be that continued suffering is praiseworthy in itself."[62]

Another viewpoint on this soliloquy is that it also highlights the body-soul conflict. Hamlet's reference in disgust to the 'solid flesh' wishes for the desolation of the body, but in fact he goes through as, John Hunt says, a relearning that the body is as essential as the spirit, and an absolute wish to end it may only end in the "ruinous violence" of the body:

> Hamlet's identity throughout the play has depended upon his wish to exceed the conditions of vulnerability and incompleteness that inhere in an animal body. But reality has repeatedly contradicted this assumed identity, insisting that the body must be central to his being, not something

[59] Prosser, p. 162.
[60] Prosser, p. 163.
[61] Prosser, p. 166.
[62] Edwards, pp. 46-7.

> inessential that can be thought into irrelevance and violently discarded. All of Hamlet's efforts to transcend corporeality have only implicated him amorally in its ruinous violence.[63]

Clemen sees this alternative presentation of choices as both typifying Hamlet's own situation and the predicament of the modern man.

> Even more important is that the weighing and balancing of one alternative against another which is expressed in this famous opening line is continued throughout the soliloquy, without any conclusion ever being drawn. Hamlet uses the interrogative form with striking frequency. It is particularly characteristic of him, expressing both the doubts and uncertainties that assail him with regard to the past and his inability to decide on a future course of action. The contemplation of two equally unacceptable alternatives is expressed here in the form of a keenly felt and yet generalized meditation, valid for all mankind. The listener senses that a fundamental problem affecting his own existence is being stated, he feels himself drawn into Hamlet's consideration of the ultimate questions of mankind. The preoccupation of modern man - his dilemmas, vain quests and searchings - are confirmed. The great art and particular effect of this soliloquy lie in the way in which the tone of personal pain and loss as well as the expressiveness and imaginative powers so typical of Hamlet are retained, and yet at the same time the personal is elevated to the level of the universal.[64]

The opposition therefore is set between life and death. Does Hamlet stop here? No. In the next four lines, he sets another set of oppositions, and this time not between life and

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[63] John Hunt, "A Thing of Nothing," in Martin Coyle, ed. *Hamlet, New Casebooks, Contemporary Critical Essays*, (McMillan Education Ltd., 1992), p. 189.
[64] Clemen, p. 137.

death, but between one form of life and another. Between calmly accepting the outrageous fortune as fate and suffer a defeated life and acting against that very fate, and thus live an honourable life. The choice is now between a doer and a non-doer - a fighter and a non-fighter. The decision is a normative one, or as Jenkins says, "a matter . . . of evaluation,"[65] whether it will be 'nobler' to do this or that. Likewise, Clemen says that the word 'nobler' "makes plain the moral perspective from which Hamlet contemplates the alternatives."[66] The psychological run of his thought is complicated and overlapping, one strand of thought catching up with the other and asking for redefinition. Because, in the next five lines he again goes back to the thought of the first line, that is, to the choice between life and death. Here he is going to categorise death, which we have already noticed to have been his habitual pattern of thinking. But then 'death' is bringing up an image of sleep, which is identical to the former but only less mortal. The tone that inspires this comparison is almost the same as Donne's when the latter poet asks death not to be proud as it is no more different from sleep.[67] Here Hamlet makes no bones about what is exasperating to him: the 'heartache' - meaning his suffering caused by murder and incest, and 'thousand natural shocks' that he or we suffer from. Death therefore is to be wished to end all this. Logically his track of thought is very sound. And the point to note is that his personalised bitterness is certified by a general consensus. We

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[65] Jenkins, p. 486.

[66] Clemen, P. 139.

[67] Jenkins, pp. 489-90: he gives a source list of the likening between sleep and death: For all their brilliant use, the ideas of the speech are for the most part traditional. Even the outline of its argument has its anticipation in Augustine *(De Libra Arbitrio,* III. vi. 19, 'It is not because I would rather be unhappy than not be at all, than I am unwilling to die, but for fear that after death I may be still more unhappy'). The likening of death to a sleep (II. 60-6) (cf. Meas. III. i. 17; Mc. II. Iii. 74; 2h4 IV. V. 35) was a Renaissance common-place descending from such works as Cicero's *Tusculan Disputations* but often referred back to Socrates. It is found, among other places, in *Cardan's De Consolatione (Comfort, trans. Bedingfield, 1573, D2),* sometimes regarded as a direct source; in Holland's translation of Plutarch's *Moralia* (1603, p. 516); and in Montaigne's *Essays* (III. 12). For its classical origins, see Anders, *Shakespeare's Books, p.275.* It was in the tradition of the ancients that Cardan thought of death as like a sleep in which 'we dream nothing', and Montaigne, here explicitly recalling Socrates, says, 'If it be a consummation of one's being, it is also an amendment and entrance into a long and quiet night. We find nothing so sweet in life, as a quiet rest and gentle sleep, and without dreams' (III. 12, Florio's trans.) By contrast Shakespeare, characteristically seeing both sides, thinks also of the possibility of dreams. But in adapting the metaphor accordingly he uses what is of course an equally traditional thought. The Homily against the Fear of Death sees 'the chief cause' of fear in 'the dread of the miserable state of eternal damnation' (Book of Homilies, 1850 edn, p. 90) CF. 1. 78. For other traditional ideas, see notes on 11.80,83, and for a possible anticipation in Belleforest, Intro., p.95

do not feel, given the situation he is in, that Hamlet should think otherwise. Then his thought is taking up another associative idea: dream. The word 'dream' appears like a flare, and epiphanically it throws light on another region of thought which is opposite to what Hamlet has so far thought. He has so far, anticipating Donne, drawn on the similarity between death and sleep, and as sleep is an agreeable thing, so is death. But when the thought of dream comes to his mind, he realises that nobody dreams in the sleep of death. That reverses his process of thought. Since nobody can dream in death, therefore death cannot be preferred. This is the reason - 'rub'[68] and 'respect' - why people undergo such calamity of a long life. Otherwise, why should man suffer 'the whips and scorns of time', the 'oppressor's wrong', the 'proud man's contumely', the 'pangs of disprized love, the 'law's delay', the 'insolence of office', and 'spurns of unworthy tales', when he can just finish his life 'with a bare bodkin?' What is it that still makes us long for life? The answer is, since nobody has ever returned from death to tell us what it is like in the afterlife, so we remain afraid to visit 'that undiscovered country from whose bourn / No traveller returns', and in this sense Hamlet sounds secular by which we mean the existentialist view that resorts to take no consideration of life beyond earth. A difference between Hamlet's reference to death and that of Claudio in *Measure for Measure* has been pointed out by Calderwood, who says that by death Hamlet uses images of life, and Claudio does not.

> Claudio is repelled by vivid images of what death *is*. For him death is not negative but a positive presence, a region of strange and horrible experiences into which the spirits of the dead are cast. Hamlet, on the other hand, is repelled by images of what life *is*. If he gives death a kind of presence as a 'country', it is nevertheless an 'undiscovered country', a 'something' so undefineable as to be a nothing.[69]

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[68] Jenkins interprets the word as 'obstacle', p. 278.

[69] James L. Calderwood, "Verbal Presence: Conceptual Absence," in Martin Coyle, ed. *Hamlet, New Casebooks, Contemporary Critical Essays* (MacMillan Education Ltd., 1922), pp. 72-3.

The idea is to stay and suffer in this world rather than 'fly to others that we know not of'. The unknown, Hamlet claims, puzzles our will, and then his next claim becomes ambiguous or at least difficult to comprehend. He says, "Thus conscience does make cowards of us all" (3.1.85). Jenkins's brilliant explication of the word 'thus' used twice in successive lines 83 and 84 (in his text) respectively is worth mentioning. The first 'thus' refers to the reason why suicide finally cannot be opted for, and the second 'thus' to the reason why no action can be contemplated.

> Some difficulty has . . . arisen at l. 84 from the transition to a new topic which the repeated 'thus' may disguise. The first *thus* (83) introduces, I take it, the conclusion which follows on all the preceding discussion: and with this the reflections prompted by the initial 'question' come to end. But at the some time they lead, with the second *thus* (84), to a further reflection on kindred matter in which the same trait of human nature may be seen. In fact the frustration of the impulse to seek death now offers itself as a particular example of a general tendency in men for any act of initiative to be frustrated by considerations which it raises in the mind.[70]

To come back to our argument, in what sense is he applying the word 'conscience'? The inner sense that chooses good and resists evil, or the consciousness that the present life on earth in spite of all its thorns is preferable to the afterlife as that is an unknowable entity![71] If it is 'consciousness', then his line of thought is congruent with what he has said before. But, it seems by 'conscience' Hamlet is actually implying the deeper sense that determines our moral judgment. Thus, when he says 'the native hue of resolution / Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought' in association with 'conscience', the meaning does not only change, but also takes on altogether a different line. The resolve for action is often diluted with the thought of consequences - whether the end-result will be worth the action to be undertaken. The thought of consequences embraces practical hazards that

[70] Jenkins, p. 488.
[71] See Jenkins, p. 280.

arise from a possible act of killing, such as a thought of practical consequences momentarily stops Macbeth in his way to regicide. When this meaning is taken, we see that the first line, "To be, or not to be; that is the question," can be reoriented by the further meaning of whether an action or *the* action, judged against the possible consequences, has to be taken or not, and here, the action, of course, is that of taking revenge. Jenkins seems to hold the idea that those who take 'to be or not to be' as meaning 'to act or not to act' are wrong[72]; but, we see that the initial meaning of the clause as meaning committing suicide or not also incorporates the later meaning of taking action or not. Even though the idea of ineffectuality of action is not in the initial premise of his argument, the latter part of the soliloquy has actually made it clear that what is balking Hamlet is not cowardice to confront a king but the consideration whether the confrontation at all is worth taking. This must sound like an expression of certitude, a kind of decision he has reached, though Clemen seems to be rather prompt to reject the idea that it can be taken as any decision having been reached:

> The keywords 'resolution' and 'action' have led some commentators to suggest that in this soliloquy Hamlet has worked his way through to a final vision which should be understood as a decision to act, a solution to the earlier dilemma which can now be left behind; but this can hardly be proved. Hamlet never gives us the final piece of information which he would have given - the sight of Ophelia causes him to break off. We can be sure that at the end of the soliloquy Shakespeare wanted us still to be unsure about the conclusion that Hamlet himself would have drawn from his meditation.[73]

The soliloquy as a piece maybe bipartite in the sense that while the first part is concerned with the thought of suicide, the second part is concerned with the effectiveness of action, though, however - and this is the great virtue of this soliloquy -

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[72] Jenkins, p. 486.
[73] Clemen, p. 140.

the two ideas seem to inhere and emanate from the same organically united thought. It is not possible to agree with Jenkins that Hamlet does not in the least contemplate suicide. He argues that suicide is not contemplated, but death's attractiveness has been imagined.[74] The Hamlet who ponders over suicide does it because he has perceived that in his nature there is a creeping sense of doubt as to whether an action (like killing Claudius) is worth taking. Hamlet does ponder suicide, though the balance is tipped in favour of still clinging to life despite its scorns. Jenkins aptly concludes:

> The soliloquy holds in skilful balance the opposites of life and death, the desire for death and the fear of death, the pains of death and the pains of life. But the conclusion to the debate is clear. Notwithstanding that the condition of human life prompts a longing for death, we 'rather bear' (81) the life we have. The 'question' is apparently decided: the alternative we choose is 'to be', 'to suffer', to 'bear'.[75]

Clemen designates the phrases with infinitives (like 'to sleep', 'to die', etc.) as suggesting the uncertain state of Hamlet's mind. Not only that, Clemen further suggests that Hamlet's train of thought does not always proceed in an antithetical way, rather it is (i.e., the speech) punctuated by frequent pauses which become all the more eloquent because the moment the next proposition begins it is done with a fully accented word or phrase, thus helping Hamlet make the transition in his thought.

> The inner drama of the soliloquy is reinforced by the fact that not all the utterances are well-balanced antithetical constructions; after nine lines the flow of thought is checked. It lingers before reaching out towards new insight, which in turn ends in a feeling of futility. We hear the full conviction of 't'is a consummation devoutly to be wished', and the unusual use of 'consummation', derived from liturgical texts, and

[74] Jenkins, p. 487.
[75] Jenkins, p. 487.

'devoutly' add something of a religious tone. But then the tempo is checked by the four infinitives already listed: 'To die, to sleep; / To sleep, perchance to dream'. The thoughts advance, but progress is blocked, and the obstacle is indicated by the colloquial brusqueness of 'ay, there's the rub'. All this within the space of mere three lines (63-5).

There is another caesura in the sense as well as in the verse when the next sentence ends with the accented 'pause', to be followed not by a weakly stressed syllable but by 'There's', also fully accented. The phrase 'Must give us pause' (68) is indicative of Hamlet's disposition, as of the whole play, but here the pause is on the threshold of eternity. There is another brief phrase, 'puzzles the will' (80), which although it is again used with reference to mankind in general, is relevant to Hamlet's particular problem, 'puzzles' having a much stronger meaning in Elizabethan English than it has now.[76]

The soliloquy is exhaustive in its details of the various ramifications of Hamlet's mind. The very nature of its dubiousness suggests how formidable it is for Hamlet to grapple with the idea of revenge. This soliloquy therefore makes all the difference between Hamlet and Shakespeare's two other major tragic figures: Macbeth and Othello. The later figures would not hesitate, Hamlet would. His hesitation does constitute the main virtue of his character. And the soliloquy has effectively dramatised this hesitant mood.

The 5th soliloquy:

'Tis now the very witching time of night,
When churchyards yawn, and hell itself breathes out
Contagion to this world. Now could I drink hot blood,
And do such bitter business as the day

[76] Clemen, p. 138.

Would quake to look on. Soft, now to my mother.
O heart, lose not they nature! Let not ever
The soul of Nero enter this firm bosom.
Let me be cruel, not unnatural.
I will speak daggers to her, but use none.
My tongue and soul in this be hypocrities-
How in my words somever she be shent,
To give them seals never my soul consent. (3.2.377-388)

Business is now brisk for Hamlet, and also for his enemies. The Queen has become concerned and sent word that she wants to talk to Hamlet. In the mean time Hamlet has discovered another truth about life, that his two child-time pals have been spying upon him by the order of the King. This disillusion harrows him further, and he breaks out in white rage, while he admonishes them for their work. By a casual trick of his genius, Hamlet has seen which object he can make use of to expose the toady characters (or 'tawdry Butterflies', as Erasmus called the courtiers[77]) his one-time friends are. He asks for a 'recorder' (a flute) to be brought in. Then asks Guildenstern to play it. As Guildenstern expresses his ignorance about the art of flute-playing, Hamlet bursts into real anger saying that if he cannot play a simple flute, how can they (because Rosencrantz is also present) hope to read Hamlet: "'Sblood, do you think I am easier to be played on than a pipe" (3.2.357)? This is how Hamlet places the two toadies, who practise the 'plastering art', and whose, as Juliet McLauchlan says, only "loyalty is, unquestioningly, to the *throne*, the worth of its occupant being simply assumed."[78]

Hamlet's language is indicative of his temper. In his thoughts now night appears as the opportune moment for witches to celebrate, and as their rituals, according to Jenkins,

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[77] See Frank McCombie's essay, " 'Hamlet' and the Moriae Encomium," in *Aspects of Hamlet*, pp. 64-74. McCombie writes: " Erasmus pictures the courtier as an ignorant and servile flatterers, skilled in the use of impressive-sounding language, extravagantly dressed, empty-headed, yet with a gift for concealing his true nature, nevertheless: 'If you make a stricter Enquiry after them their other Endowments, you shall find them meer Sots and Dotts' (Kennet, p. 127), p. 69.

[78] McLauchlan, "The Prince of Denmark and Claudius's Court," in *Aspects of Hamlet*, p. 53.

included drinking hot blood,[79] so does Hamlet want to drink it to prove his mettle. The very reference to drinking hot blood suggests on the other hand that the mandate of revenge has instilled a sense of duty, which pushes him to a job for which he is noticeably unprepared. In addition to drinking blood, Hamlet like Macbeth and Lady Macbeth wants the day not to look at the "bitter business" (3.2.380) on hand - that is, the killing of Claudius. But he cannot be harsh on his mother, because the Ghost has asked him not to ("Taint not thy mind, nor let thy soul contrive / Against thy mother aught." (1.5.85-6)). He pledges to himself not to lose his "nature" (3.2.382) - in the sense of filial bond - and not to act like Nero who put his own mother to death. He promises that he will be cruel, but not unnatural, and, through a striking image, he says he will "speak daggers to her" (3.2.357) - which he does, but will not put his harsh words into action.

This is technically a scene-ending soliloquy, providing clue to the audience about the future action. By now the audience visualises that Hamlet, after being confirmed about the King's culpability through the play, has been able to overcome his hesitation which was so decisively manifested in the previous soliloquy, and though he lets us have this hunch that he is not used to killing, but he is determined to do it at a first given opportunity. Thus with his restored confidence in himself as a revenger, the audience also feels reassured.

Then comes King Claudius's soliloquy delivered in the praying scene in the presence of Hamlet. This is considered as a soliloquy exactly for the same reason as determined Lear's apostrophe to the storm as a soliloquy. Both Lear (not initially, but gradually during the time of delivering the speech) and Claudius are unaware of the presence of others.

> O, my offence is rank! It smells to heaven.
> It hath the primal eldest curse upon't,
> A brother's murder. Pray can I not.
> Though inclination be as sharp as will ,

[79] Jenkins, p. 310.

My stronger guilt defeats my strong intent,
And like a man to double business bound
I stand in pause where I shall first begin,
And both neglect. What if this cursed hand
Were thicker than itself with brother's blood,
Is there not rain enough in the sweet heavens
To wash it white as snow? Whereto serves mercy
But to confront the visage of offence?
And what's in prayer but this twofold force,
To be forestalled ere we come to fall,
Or pardoned being down? Then I'll look up.
My fault is past - but O, what form of prayer
Can serve my turn? 'Forgive me my foul murder'?
That cannot be, since I am still possessed
Of those effects for which I did the murder-
My crown, mine own ambition, and my queen.
May one be pardoned and retain th'offence ?
In the corrupted currents of this world
Offence's gilded hand may shove by justice,
And oft 'tis seen the wicked prize itself
Buys out the law. But 'tis not so above.
There is no shuffling, there the action lies
In his true nature, and we ourselves compelled
Even to the teeth and forehead of our faults
To give in evidence. What then? What rests?
Try what repentance can. What can it not?
Yet what can it when one cannot repent?
O wretched state, O bosom black as death,
O limited soul that, struggling to be free,
Art more engaged! Help, angels! Make assay.

Bow, stubborn knees; and heart with strings of steel,
Be soft as sinews of the new-born babe.
All may be well.

(3.2.36-72)

Claudius's soliloquy is necessitated by the dramatic fact that the audience should not be left without evidence that he actually did the murder. Through the Ghost's version and through his reaction in the play scene we come to know that he is the killer, but still then to exonerate Hamlet from any sin it is necessary that the confession of the crime should come from Claudius himself. And, to sustain the dramatic interest further, Hamlet is not let into the scene until Claudius has completed offering his failed prayer. From another point of view this soliloquy is the index of the superficiality that Claudius and his court have brought to a height. Claudius's speech is supposed to be a deeply repenting speech. But nothing can be farthest from it. Throughout he maintains an exhortative tone by which he raises a point to exculpate himself only to cancel it as obviously unsuitable. The biblical image of the fratricide which also featured in Hamlet's first soliloquy (1.2.129-59) returns as Claudius confesses that he cannot pray because of his unforgivable sin. As if to indicate the emptiness of his speech, Shakespeare makes him use the imagery of rain to wash out his crimes. But how insufficient does it sound! In tone as well as in affliction it sounds miles away from Macbeth's having poignantly realised that even the Arabian sea will be insufficient to wash the blood stains from his hand. Through the soliloquies of Shakespeare's major characters we are let into their hearts, as with Macbeth particularly his soliloquies are a clue to the struggle of whatever goodness is left in him, highlighted through such images as the naked new-born babe, against the dominant overpowering evil forces in him, and, similarly, in Othello's case his realisation of "A murder which I thought a sacrifice" (5.2.70) punctuates his suffering, and utterances like these only give testimony to what great potential they have for the good, whereas Claudius's language is bereft of any such poignancy in terms of expression or imagery. He also shows a consequential pattern of thinking. He has referred to rain, which reminds us of Portia's associating it with mercy ("The quality of mercy is not strained," *Mer. V.* 4.1.181 ff), but

unlike her he does not use it to refer to the endless capacity of mercy. So, instead of believing in the free-flowing mercy like rain, he thinks that he has lost the right to pray because he is still possessed of the effects ("My crown, mine own ambition, and my queen" (3.2.56)) accrued to him through the murder. He then brings up a comparative perspective between the judgment on earth and that in heaven. About the former he thinks it is purchasable: "In the corrupted currents of this world / Offence's gilded hand may shove by justice, / And oft 'tis seen the wicked prize itself / Buys out the law" (3.2.57-60). Though it echoes Lear's famous utterance: "Plate sin, with gold, / And the strong lance of justice hurtless breaks" (4.6.165-6), Claudius's speech seems to come as mere lip-service to some reformist thinking, whereas Lear's does not only inhere in the context of the speech, but also comes through his realisation of the fact of maldistribution of wealth in society. Besides, Claudius's imagery of "Offence's gilded hand" shoots out from nowhere and disappears without spreading any viscose link between language and thought. The imagery only serves to show the great poverty of mind Claudius's is. As he refers to heaven above, where there is "no shuffling" (3.4.61), he speaks of the rigorous physical torture to be received by him in a language that again sounds like a text-book lesson, there is no personal horror to it. We have not entered his heart, because, as Inga-Stina Ewbank comments, "Claudius . . . lacks a really private language."[80] Only in the last few lines, Claudius's cry for repentance does sound genuine: "Yet what can it when one cannot repent" (3.4.66)? He refers to his "lim'ed soul . . . struggling to be free" (68), and to his "stubborn knees" and steely sinews that he desires to be "soft as sinews of the new-born babe" (68-71).

The overall effect of this soliloquy is that it has truly exposed the vacuity of Claudius's heart. This has been necessary, otherwise the suave accomplished Claudius of the second scene would have still lingered in our mind as a positive image, and would probably have made Hamlet's action questionable. By extension, however, this soliloquy puts in place the superficial culture of the court of Elsinore. We can at once see that Claudius is the arch representative in the play of the group of people which include every body from Polonius to Osric (the 'water-fly', (5.2.84) as Hamlet calls him) whose only

[80] Inga-Stina Ewbank, " 'Hamlet' and the Power of Words," in *Aspects of Hamlet*, p. 93.

function in the play, through their 'plastering art' and blind sycophancy, is to play a hostile role against Hamlet. Their speech modes and habits are marked with word-play and sententiousness, with a lot of puns - features which R. A. Foakes claims to be part of Hamlet's language too.[81] Loyalty at Elsinore, as we have already pointed out, is to the throne, or more specifically, to it for power and influence. Commenting on the atmosphere at Claudius's court, Juliet McLauchlan aptly says, "The body of Claudius's Denmark functions and is sustained precisely through interdependence of usurper and blind supporters."[82] In fact, Claudius's court has been peopled by, in Erasmus's language, 'tawdry Butterflies' and 'fawning Courtiers'[83], and, judging from Claudius's present speech we see that it is vacuity all the way through.

After such a baring of himself, Claudius becomes a subject of reprisal, and it is only a matter of time that he will be exposed. As he fails in his prayer, Hamlet, who has been standing behind him, secures the best opportunity to take his revenge. His thoughts, delivered in his 5th soliloquy, however, go contrary to our expectations.

> Now might I do it pat, now a is praying,
> And now I'll do't,
> [*He draws his sword*]
> and so a goes to heaven,
> And so am I revenged. That would be scanned.
> A villain kills my father, and for that
> I, his sole son, do this same villain send
> To heaven.
> O, this is hire and salary, not revenge!
> A took my father grossly, full of bread,
> With all his crimes broad blown, as flush as May;

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[81] See Inga-Stina Ewbank's essay mentioned above. She refers to Foakes's essay, "*Hamlet* and the Court of Elsinore," *Shakespeare Survey* 9 (Cambridge, 1956). Page 94.
[82] McLauchlan, p. 53.
[83] McCombie, pp. 69-70.

And how his audit stands, who knows save heaven?
'Tis heavy with him. And am I then revenged
To take him in the purging of his soul,
When he is fit and seasoned for his passage?
No.
*He sheathes his sword*
Up, sword, and know thou a more horrid hint.
When he is drunk asleep, or in his rage,
Or in th'incestuous pleasure of his bed,
At gaming, swearing, or about some act
That has no relish of salvation in't,
Then trip him that his heels may kick at heaven,
And that his soul may be as damned and black
As hell whereto it goes. My mother stays.
This physic but prolongs thy sickly days. (3.3.73-96)

Hamlet enters the scene finding Claudius praying. He stands behind him, draws his sword, and is about to thrust it through him. Though he has not heard what the king has said in his prayer, yet he stops, thinking that killing Claudius when he is praying will send him not to hell, but to heaven, thus defeating his purpose. If he kills Claudius right now, his act will be 'scanned' (75), (which means 'interpreted,' [84]) as sending the killer of his own father to heaven. That kind of revenge is not revenge at all, but done by a professional for mere salary. His father was killed in sleep, not even having been given the time to expiate his sins, and nobody knows whether he is gone to heaven or hell. Whereas intending to kill Claudius in his prayer will mean Hamlet has just arranged for him to be sent to heaven. And, that cannot be done. He cannot help Claudius travel to heaven. Thinking this he sheathes his sword, gives a pat on it saying in a pacifying tone that a more opportune moment ('a more horrid hint' (88)) will come. He says, Claudius can be killed when he is found drunk, or in rage, or in bed committing incest, or at

[84] Jenkins, p. 316

anything which is not holy. So, the moment Hamlet gets him at any situation like this, he will "trip him" (93) so that his heels kick at heaven, and his soul goes to hell. He then leaves Claudius at his prayer which he thinks will be ineffectual.

This soliloquy clearly gives the reason why Hamlet does not kill Claudius when the opportunity presents itself. Should we accept his reason as genuine? Very difficult to answer. In fact, this soliloquy combines with the "To be or not to be" soliloquy to give rise to the great critical debate about Hamlet's procrastination.

Let us make a survey of what critical opinions have been forwarded so far as reply to the question, 'Why does Hamlet delay'? To answer this reverberating question critics have viewed Hamlet's problem/s by raising many different questions: Is Hamlet morally obligated to obey the Ghost? The supplementary question is, what were the ethical attitudes of the Elizabethans towards revenge? What was the status of the Ghost? Does Hamlet fail (or delay) because of some inherent weakness of character? Or does he delay because, as David Leverenz says, he has been asked to play roles which take him away from his true and original self, which is similar to his mother's - simple and straight forward.[85]

The Ghost has asked Hamlet to take revenge upon Claudius, which means to kill him. The mandate straightway goes against the commandment: 'Thou shalt not kill.' But critics up to the nineteenth century seem to have taken Hamlet's job as a 'sacred duty'. Johnson, as Siegel reports, was of the opinion that poetic justice was not served as Shakespeare also let Hamlet (the revenger) die along with the killer. So Siegel comments, "The moral lesson that Johnson demanded does not include, it would seem, the idea that vengeful murder is wrong and should be punished."[86] Coleridge, as Siegel notes, also takes up a paradoxical stance. By quoting Coleridge's oft-quoted line that Hamlet is 'called upon to act by every motive human and divine', Siegel asks if Coleridge had not ever "heard about the law against murder and the commandment

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[85] David Leverenz, "The Woman in Hamlet: An Interpersonal View," in Martin Coyle, ed. *Hamlet, New Casebooks, Contemporary Critical Essays* (MacMillan Education Ltd., 1992), p. 133.

[86] Paul N. Siegel, " 'Hamlet, Revenge!': The Uses and Abuses of Historical Criticism," in *Shakespeare Survey 45*, p. 16.

'Thou shalt not kill.'[87] Depending on Siegel, however, we cannot say that both Johnson and Coleridge could have been unaware about the moral confusion the text had put them into, but it is just that they are making a natural response to a great but difficult piece of literature. It is unthinkable by any standard of criticism to applaud Hamlet, if in spite of the resistance from his conscience, he does not go for the killing. We often give judgment on literature which may not be the same as we would give on situations in our own real life. To avoid this moral confusion, E. E. Stoll suggests that the delay should be taken as a necessary stage-device practised in order to withhold the audience's suspense until the fifth act is over. He further says that the revenger is governed by stage morals, and not by, as Siegel paraphrases, "the moral canons of real life."[88] But the critic who makes the most sustained analysis of Hamlet's procrastination is A. C. Bradley. There is no way that we can sum up this fine critic sufficiently to satisfaction, but he, rejecting the view which he preferably calls as Schlegel-Coleridge theory that labels *Hamlet* as a tragedy of reflection,[89] says that the reason for Hamlet's inaction is a deep-seated melancholy caused by his mother's 'falling off' (as we earlier quoted McLauchlan saying that Gertrude's violation of the marriage vows is what causes Hamlet's shock), and his uncle's treachery. Thus Bradley does not accept the reason stated by Hamlet in the "Now might I do it pat" speech regarding his excuse for not killing Claudius, and thinks that these very words "show that he has no effective *desire* to 'do it'."[90] Despite the fact that Hamlet's hatred against Claudius as projected through the soliloquy is intense and genuine,s he fails to make up his mind when Claudius is in fact delivered to him by providence, and this failure, as Bradley says, "is the cause of all the disasters that follow."[91] His sparing of Claudius is not caused by a feeling that it will ensure salvation to him, but by an all-pervasive melancholy that makes him apathetic to action. Whence grows this apathy? Bradley explains that it is not caused by his father's death, but by the

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[87] Siegel, p. 16.
[88] Siegel, p. 16.
[89] Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy*, p. 83: "There remains, finally, that class of view which may be named after Schlegel and Coleridge. According to this, *Hamlet* is the tragedy of reflection. The cause of the hero's delay is irresolution; and the cause of this irresolution is excess of the reflective or speculative habit of mind."
[90] Bradley, p. 107.
[91] Bradley, p. 108.

sudden moral shock he receives at the "disclosure of his mother's true nature."[92] "It brings bewildered horror," continues Bradley, "then loathing, then despair of human nature. His whole mind is poisoned. . . . He can do nothing."[93] This diseased state of mind is called melancholy by Bradley, and "it accounts for the main fact, Hamlet's inaction."[94]

As Bradley does a little introspective research into Hamlet's life, he finds that the cause of this extreme disillusion in Hamlet lies in the excessive dotage he had for his mother, as well as his father had for her: "All his life he had believed in her, we may be sure, as such a son would. He had seen her not merely devoted to his father, but hanging on him like a newly-wedded bride, hanging on him. . ."[95]

Unlike Bradley, however, Ernest Jones (a Freudian psychoanalyst) traces Hamlet's inability to act to a sexual problem. He explains that all human psychological problems have origins in, though not apparent on the surface, sexual repressions. He explains that the root of Hamlet's problem is that he sees his uncle not only as a usurper of the throne, but also as a usurper of his mother's affection for him. And, though he is immensely disappointed in his mother for whom he has desires since childhood, he cannot but see his uncle performing something which, in his deepest psyche, he really craves for. We quote from Jones for the general definition of sexual repressions, and for how it can be related to Hamlet's inaction:

> It only remains to add the obvious corollary that, as the herd unquestionably selects from the "natural" instincts the sexual one on which to lay its heaviest ban, so it is the various psycho-sexual trends that are most often "repressed" by the individual. We have here the explanation of the clinical experience that the more intense and the more obscure is a given case of deep mental conflict the more certainly will it be found on adequate analysis to center about a sexual problem. On the

[92] Bradley, p. 94.
[93] Bradley, p. 95.
[94] Bradley, p. 97.
[95] Bradley, p. 94.

surface, of course, this does not appear so, for, by means of various psychological defensive mechanisms, the depression, doubt, despair, and other manifestations of the conflict are transferred on to more tolerable and permissible topics, such as anxiety about worldly success or failure, about immortality and the salvation of the soul, philosophical considerations about the value of life, the future of the world, and so on.

[As applied to Hamlet]

The association of the idea of sexuality with his mother, buried since infancy, can no longer be concealed from his consciousness. As Bradley well says: "Her son was forced to see in her action not only an astounding shallowness of feeling, but an eruption of coarse sensuality, 'rank and gross,' speeding posthaste to its horrible delight." Feelings which once, in the infancy of long ago, were pleasurable desires can now, because of his repressions, only fill him with repulsion. The long "repressed" desire to take his father's place in his mother's affection is stimulated to unconscious activity by the sight of someone usurping this place exactly as he himself had once longed to do. More, this someone was a member of the same family, so that the actual usurpation further resembled the imaginary one in being incestuous. Without his being in the least aware of it these ancient desires are ringing in his mind, are once more struggling to find conscious expression, and need such an expenditure of energy again to "repress" them that he is reduced to the deplorable mental state he himself so vividly depicts.[96]

Yet another approach, very different in nature from other responses, to Hamlet's delay is put forth by R. A. Foakes in his essay, "The Art of Cruelty: Hamlet and Vindice."[97] He

[96] Ernest Jones, "Hamlet and Oedipus," in *Twentieth Century Interpretations of* Hamlet, p. 108.
[97] In *Aspects of Hamlet*, pp. 28-38.

theorises that Hamlet has the cruelty in him, but his extraordinary imagination recreates the horrible consequences of cruelty so thoroughly in his mind that he feels morally repulsed to committing any actual crime. The horror of cruelty is revealed to him by the Ghost in his description of the effects of poison on his body. The murder of Priam, and the weeping of Hecuba as narrated by the Player, and the play-within-the-play provide him further with the horrible nature of crime. Thus, instead of committing actual act of cruelty, Hamlet rather builds up the framework of art of cruelty, which finally saves him from outright savagery. Foakes draws on an analogy from Dostoyevsky's reference to Turkish soldiers' cruelty as depicted in *The Brothers Karamozov*. Foakes says that Hamlet's killing of Polonius and Claudius was unintentional, thus not morally insecure. Though, he believes, Hamlet's two acts of cruelty may be detected in his conversation with Ophelia (the nunnery scene), and with his mother (the closet-scene), Hamlet can still differentiate between art and life. Hamlet's mind fills up with a moral revulsion at the horrors of crime that he can imaginatively grasp, and therefore his action constitutes what he actually puts "into art, into shows, into plays within the play, or the rhetoric of his encounters with Ophelia and Gertrude."[98]

What Foakes understands by Hamlet's moral revulsion is evident in his comment on the playlet scene:

> Hamlet's playing [the playlet] dwells on the image of a murder which reflects the cruelty of the deed and the horror of revenge; and so reveals to us what is not apparent to Hamlet himself, his *moral revulsion* from the task he feels the Ghost has imposed on him.[99]

Though Foakes's thesis talks about Hamlet's moral revulsion, he actually addresses the moral ambiguity that surrounds Hamlet's duty of revenge.

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[98] Foakes, p. 38.

[99] Foakes, p. 37.

In her influential study, Eleanor Prosser gives an exhaustive description of the Elizabethan attitudes towards revenge. She says that though passion for revenge is deep-rooted in human nature, it was considered a "reprehensible blasphemy", the argument against revenge being that it endangered the soul of the revenger. The frequently quoted Scriptural text "Vindicta mihi" ("Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.") was used as a watchword. Quoting from the Lord's Prayer she says that "Eternal damnation was not only penalty for revenge, but it also caused mental derangement. When revenge possesses a man he shuts all other considerations and becomes like a mad-dog and sinks to 'the most bestial cruelties.'"[100] The question then is what will an injured party do? Two alternatives: a) to approach law, or b) if law is inaccessible, then 'nothing'. "True justice demands that man's first concern should be not punishing the sin, but saving the sinner."[101] Conscience itself was considered as a potential source of punishment. "Thus even the most corrupt sinner must be left to Heaven's judgment."[102] She makes a difference between stoic endurance and Christian patience. A true Christian subjects his injured feeling (unlike a Stoic) to God or Providence. As against this orthodox code, there was a counter-code that considered private revenge as a part of honour rather than a sin against God.[103] However, there was a difference between murder and manslaughter. Murder was never justified by law, but unpremeditated and instantly retaliatory killing might be forgiven by a royal pardon.[104] Hamlet's killing of Polonius would have been adjudged murder, not man-slaughter by an Elizabethan court, because Hamlet had originally planned to kill Claudius.[105] Bacon's essay, "Of Revenge" (1625), is a phenomenal statement of "unequivocal condemnation of private revenge under any circumstances"[106]: "Revenge is a wild justice; which the more man's nature runs to, the more ought law to weed it out." "The two clauses," as Hattaway explains, "of the sentence reveal not only the customary contemporary abhorrence of the vendetta but a

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[100] Prosser, p. 8.
[101] Prosser, p. 11.
[102] Prosser, p.11.
[103] Prosser, p.13.
[104] Prosser, p.18.

[105] Prosser, p.19.
[106] Prosser, p. 20.

recognition that a desire for vengeance is 'natural' to one who feels he has been wronged."[107] Prosser discusses many literary pieces of the time, including Nashe's *The Unfortunate Traveller* (1594) and Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* to show that the testimony against private revenge is heavy.

Prosser, indicating the ethical dilemma revenge posed to the Elizabethans, warns that the prevalent absolute against private revenge does not mean that it did not exist, neither that it was less popular, and in fact on the Elizabethan stage it looks, paradoxically, to be the most popular form of drama. Prosser says,

> Admittedly, then, we cannot find the reality by defining the ideal. At the same time, however, we cannot define the reality and then call it the ideal. The high rate of alcoholism in the United States does not indicate that the average man approves of drunkenness. Indeed, very few drunkards would argue that their actions are governed by any code of morality, even their own. A man may hate his next-door neighbour and yet believe wholeheartedly in the brotherhood of man. Today we might say that natural instinct rebels against established mores; the Elizabethan preacher would say that original sin rebels against divine law.[108]

Siegel's comment supplants Prosser's view:

> The contradiction between the official code and the undercurrent of feeling derived from feudal tradition caused the audience to have mixed feelings towards the revenger in the revenge plays. It began by sympathising with the avenger but found its sympathy alienated, as in the pursuit of his revenge he plunged into crime after crime. Yet it ' hoped for his success, but only on condition that he did not survive. Thus his death

[107] Hattaway, pp. 83-84.
[108] Prosser, *Hamlet and Revenge* (Stanford, 1967), p. 24.

> was accepted as expiation for the violent motives which had forced him to override the rules of God . . ."[109]

Prosser classifies two types of revengers on the Elizabethan stage: The villain-revengers and the hero-revengers.[110] While the villain-revengers were usually loathed, the hero-revengers were considered as a new group which consisted of heroes like Hieronimo, Antonio, Vindici, and Hamlet.[111] The hero-revenger is basically a good man, but he "sustains an injury so severe that the law would execute the evildoer or would pardon his immediate slaying by a private citizen. The hero-revenger may have flaws of character, but, at least he must decide whether or not to take private revenge, his primary commitment is to virtue."[112] Hieronimo, in Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy* (c. 1587) presents a good case of the dilemma. Hieronimo is made to appeal to both heaven and hell for justice, thus putting the audience into confusion about how to respond to him: ". . . Kyd's explicit appeal to Christian judgment in '*Vindicta mihi,*' the association of revenge with night, Hell, and the fiends, and the manifest relationships between revenge and passion, madness, despair, and savagery - all these make it extremely doubtful that Kyd's audience viewed Hieronimo as justified."[113]

Saying that private revenge was not endorsed either on stage or outside it before the play, *Hamlet*, came on the stage, Prosser defines that with Hamlet our "concern is with the basically virtuous character who sustains (or thinks he sustains) a serious injury but has (or thinks he has) no recourse to the law."[114] She, drawing evidence from over thirty characters from the Shakespearean canon, claim that nowhere does Shakespeare seem to have endorsed private blood revenge.[115] Commenting on the Player's Speech, Prosser thinks that Shakespeare has intended us to understand why Hamlet shows sympathy for Hecuba, and not for Pyrrhus who is actually a role model for him - a son who has to

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[109] Siegel, p. 17. The quotation is from Fredson Thayer Bowers' *Elizabethan Revenge Tragedy*, 1587-1642 (Princeton, 1940), p. 184.
[110] Prosser, p. 40.
[111] Prosser, p. 39.
[112] Prosser, p. 40.
[113] Prosser, p. 52.
[114] Prosser, pp. 63 &77.
[115] Prosser, p. 93.

avenge his father's death. Prosser asserts that Shakespeare has directed our attention to Priam, and not to Pyrrhus, because the latter's action seems to smack of cruelty which was disapproved by the Elizabethans.

> Throughout the speech, the audience's sympathies are entirely with Priam, the victim, not with the son who revenges the death of his father. In the ferocity of Pyrrhus, in his raging fury and diabolic resolution, we see exactly what might become if he pursues the course upon which he has embarked. This, I suggest, was Shakespeare's purpose in modifying the traditional description of Pyrrhus and in focusing carefully on the parallel. . . . Do we really want Hamlet to act like this?[116]

Prosser tries to find the ethical dimension in Shakespeare's handling of Hamlet's problem. Through her extensive survey she establishes the fact that Shakespeare experiments through Hamlet with the problem of how to effect private revenge, when there is in the background so much theological, philosophical, and literary resistance against it.

Thus when Calderwood sees Hamlet, what Jenkins calls a dual role,[117] both as a revenger and a target of revenge, he refers to the very pattern of the 'to be or not to be' speech, saying that the opposites work the reverse way. That is, like a dyer's hand, Claudius's offence will be his. That is the purging angel he cannot be, unless he stains himself, as Calderwood writes.

> The minister punishes sin without sacrificing his own virtue, but the scourge suffers the fate of the dyer's hand, which is subdued to what it works in - and Hamlet's hand is at work in the dark dyes of revenge and a leprous distilment that bathes the world of the court.[118]

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[116] Prosser, p. 154.
[117] Jenkins, p. 143.
[118] James A. Calderwood, pp. 74-75.

Though Prosser's is a very fine study, its one inadequacy seems to be that while the main thrust of her thesis is concerned with the ethical question regarding revenge, she has hardly touched upon the dubious status of the Ghost as a relevant aspect of Hamlet's delay, whereas many critics consider the very introduction of the Ghost to be the greatest block in Hamlet's way. Though these two aspects of the problem of delay - the ethical dilemma concerning revenge and the existence of the Ghost as a dubious signifier - maybe or should be seen in the long run to have emerged from the same paradigm of thought, still it is pertinent that the problem posed by the Ghost be also elaborately discussed.

The bi-focal aspect of Hamlet's situation is effectively summed up by Hattaway:



> Hamlet is impaled on the horns of a contradiction, and the main ethical dilemma for the hero and the spectators is to decide whether the task enjoined by the Ghost is a religious or political one - whether Hamlet is to be God's scourge in clearing out the impostumed corruption in the Court of Denmark, or whether he is in bad faith, allowing a personal vendetta to become a motive for purposive, and casual, slaughter in the attempt to assassinate an elected monarch.[119]

'To assassinate an *elected* monarch' - if Hamlet goes for that, then the haunting question remains: is it right? One outcome, rather a negative one, of the prodigious study of Prosser is, as Edwards points out, that it 'tends to make too little of Claudius's crime,' while the fact that Hamlet is struggling 'to make a bad deed good' is ignored.[120] Hamlet's problem is not only to revenge, but to be free, as Maynard Mack suggests, of the 'contamination' of guilt, or, as Nigel Alexander questions: " . . . how does one deal with such a man [after having the proof that Claudius is the killer] without becoming like him?"[121] Hamlet has to translate, as Ulrici points out, the "external action" of revenge

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[119] Hattaway, pp. 83-84.
[120] Edwards, "Tragic Balance in 'Hamlet'," in *Shakespeare Survey 36* (1983), p. 44. The following discussion is based on this article.
[121] Quoted by Edwards, p. 44.

"into one that is *internal*, free and, and truly *moral*."[122] Now, whence can Hamlet receive this authentic guidance? Edwards points out that the tragedy lies in the *process* that the hero "longs for clear directives to govern his action . . . . But the God to whom he looks, in whose existence he dares to believe, whom he longs to obey, is shrouded and hidden."[123] Claudius says, "'tis not so above. *There* is no shuffling." But, who guarantees that? The Ghost? But, the next question: is the Ghost a divine or demonic spirit? The question is left unanswered in the play. Is the Ghost certainly a symbol from heaven?[124] It may, however, be argued that there is no way to distinguish an act of violence from the one divinely endorsed. This also poses a basic problem to Hamlet, and more to us in the modern world. But, then, as Edwards sanely puts it, we must understand that some sense of *authorised violence* has to be recognised as valid if we want to appreciate the tragic sense of the play.[125]

In explaining this dilemma, Edwards refers to Kierkegaard's philosophy from his *Fear and Trembling* when the latter interprets the Abraham and Issac story from the Genesis. Kierkegaard discusses that Abraham, as "an obedient child of God", was going to sacrifice his son which was against "the laws of worldly ethics." "This indeed is faith" which, according to Kierkegaard, is "a paradox which is capable of transforming a murder into a holy act well-pleasing to God". But, he asks, "If the individual had misunderstood the deity - what can save him?"[126] Edwards says that Kierkegaard considers any one playing providence as 'demoniacal'.[127]

Thus the confusion continues. Though, he does not contradict Kierkegaard in obvious terms, Edwards suggests that Hamlet makes a definite transition in his thoughts after he returns from the sea. Edwards suggests that until the time Hamlet is sent away to the sea he has all through been nurturing his dilemma with absolutes set by himself. But, after escaping the King's conspiracy and making his safe landing on the pirate ship, which is

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[122] Quoted by Edwards, p. 44.
[123] Edwards, p. 45.
[124] Edwards, p. 50.
[125] Edwards, p. 49.
[126] Edwards, p. 50. Quotes from Kierkegaard's, *Fear and Trembling*; tr. W. Lowrie (New York, 1941), pp. 64, 71, 90, & 95.

Denmark-bound, Hamlet realises there is divinity in the patterns of human workings: "There's divinity in the fall of a sparrow," or, "There's a divinity that shapes our ends" (5.2.10), upon which critics like Alan Sinfield thinks that Hamlet, reflecting Calvin, is "proposing a high degree of divine intervention and suggesting predestination."[128] This realisation Edwards rightly feels connects his (Hamlet's) own world, which is necessarily limited, as all personal visions are, with a higher (greater) world, that has things in store that can never be predicted or comprehended by human beings. He ends the essay by quoting the two famous lines: "There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, / Than are dreamt of in our philosophy" (1.5.167-68).

> The sense of an order of distinction among people which is ratified in heaven, the sense that there is a communication between heaven and earth, the sense that there can be a cleansing act of violence which is both a punishment and a liberation, these are as powerfully present in the play as is the conviction that these things do not exist. Hamlet's groping attempt to make a higher truth active in a fallen world fails hopelessly. But just suppose we can entertain the *possibility* that he was within reach of a higher truth. . . . But he continues, or he ought to continue, to vex and trouble us with the suspicion, and the fear, that although he never got there, he may have been after something worth having.[129]

Thus Edwards's conclusion is that the tragedy of Hamlet lies not in his failure, but in the *process* that he is going to accomplish an act divinely ordained, while at the same time he is deeply suspicious about it. Whether he would do it the proper way the higher world intends him to, nobody has an answer for that, nor does Shakespeare wish that anybody should, but that Hamlet is involved in the *process* is the measure of his tragedy.

While Edwards is willing to allow a Christian sense of providence to emerge, Sinfield, on the other hand, disagrees. He thinks that Shakespeare may have been concerned here

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[127] Edwards, p. 50.

[128] Alan Sinfield, "Hamlet's Special Providence," *Shakespeare Survey 33* (1980), p. 93.

with the alternative ideas of stoicism and predestination. Seneca, who influenced the Elizabethan revenge plays in highlighting stoicism has been exploited here by Shakespeare to teach endurance. But, this is in contradiction with Christian submission, as Sinfield writes drawing on Calvin's authority: "Calvin distinguished Stoic patience, which accepts what happens because 'so it must be', and Christian, which cheerfully embraces God's will 'with calm and graceful minds'."[130] The orthodox theology presents a dual set of alternatives with evil. On the one hand, if the freedom of the will is acknowledged, then acts may go out of control of God, and every thing will be dependent on blind fortune. Or, if a sense of predestination is acknowledged, then God has to take responsibility for the evil acts, thus putting man into further confusion. Sinfield thus says:

> *Hamlet* presents this dissatisfaction with orthodox theology in an unusually coherent form. By undermining humanistic Stoicism and positing a controlling deity in words deriving from Calvin the play takes us to the brink of Protestant affirmation, but Hamlet's fatalistic attitude encourages us to question divine justice.[131]

The last soliloquy:

> How all occasions do inform against me
> And spur my dull revenge! What is a man
> If his chief good and market of his time
> Be but to sleep and feed? -a beast, no more.
> Sure, he that made us with such large discourse,
> Looking before and after, gave us not
> That capability and god-like reason

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[129] Edwards, p.50.
[130] Sinfield, p. 95.
[131] Sinfield, p. 97.

To fust in us unused. Now whether it be
Bestial oblivion, or some craven scruple
Of thinking too precisely on th'event-
A thought which, quartered, hath but one part wisdom
And ever three parts coward-I do not know
Why yet I live to say 'This thing's to do',
Sith I have cause, and will, and strength, and means,
To do't. Examples gross as earth exhort me,
Witness this army of such mass and charge,
Led by a delicate and tender prince,
Whose spirit with divine ambition puffed
Makes mouths at the invisible event,
Exposing what is mortal and unsure
To all that fortune, death, and danger dare,
Even for an eggshell. Rightly to be great
Is not to stir without great argument,
But greatly to find quarrel in a staw
When honour's at the stake. How stand I, then,
That have a father killed, a mother stained,
Excitements of my reason and my blood,
And let all sleep while, to my shame, I see
The imminent death of twenty thousand men
That, for a fantasy and trick of fame,
Go to their graves like beds, fight for a plot
Whereon the numbers cannot try the cause,
Which is not tomb enough and continent
To hide the slain. O, from this time forth
My thoughts be bloody or be nothing worth! (4.4.23-57)

This soliloquy should supplant the "What a peasant slave am I" soliloquy, as it is again speaking about the emulative spirit that Hamlet knows he possesses, but to execute which he lacks the willpower. His dull (meaning 'slow') revenge is being spurred all the time by whatever he sees. The precise definition of man comes to his mind again, like 'what a piece of thing is man' type. Hamlet categorically denies, in accordance with the traditional sense, that the two basic functions - sleeping and eating - cannot constitute the definition of man. A beast has the instinctive and bodily requirements to be fufilled, but not the human beings. He remembers the Creator, and rightly thinks that the power of reason which is only given to mankind cannot remain unused: "To fust in us unused" (4.4.30). He again initiates an enquiry into his own nature. What is balking him? Mere forgetfulness. Possibly, as we assume that the burden of revenge is too much on him. Or, is it his conscience wound up with too much thinking that has made him a coward, an uninitiated, or, is his 'craven scruple' responsible? The thought which is apparently coming from the conscience is actually one part wisdom and three-fourths cowardice. He wonders again, why he is still living to say that he has to do the thing, since he has got every thing at his disposal: "Sith I have cause, and will, and strength, and means, / To do't" (4.4.36-7). There are all sorts of occasions and examples for him to realise what he should do. The great and puissant army led by a tender Prince, Fortinbrass, is ready to shed its blood 'for an eggshell'. He then utters a famous idea, not much recognised in critical studys, that to be great one does not need to embrace a great occasion. Even in the smallest of affairs man can show greatness. And, that is honour: "Rightly to be great / Is not to stir without great argument, / But greatly to find quarrel in a straw / When honour's at the stake" (4.4.45-7). What is his position then, compared to the troops twenty thousand strong who are going to sacrifice their lives upon a 'fantasy and trick of fame' (4.4.52), and go hug their death like 'beds' possibly, as Sigfried Sassoon would say, like 'dreamers',[132] whereas Hamlet is sitting and fusting and doing nothing. So, from now on his thoughts would be bloody, and nothing else.

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[132] See his poem, "Dreamers," in Margaret and Desmond Flower, eds. *Cassell's Anthology of English Poetry* (Cassell, London, Fourth edition, 1950), p. 412.

The seven soliloquies of Hamlet form into an argument which is multi-layered. In the Introduction we have argued that it is not likely for the soliloquies of the plays we are considering to give out a unified theme, and this is also true about the soliloquies of Hamlet. Still then, Hamlet's soliloquies come very near to shaping a theme which may be named as 'an exegesis on revenge'. Apart from this thematic concern, the soliloquies, as some of them are quite long, form into a substantial body of poetry which is essential for the structure of the play. In fact, *Hamlet* is the only play in Shakespeare which outweighs other plays in sheer number of soliloquized lines. Since the soliloquy, as its convention went, was used for the character to speak out his thoughts, Hamlet's very many soliloquies are a proof that the issues Hamlet wants to soliloquize about are of grave import.

In the first soliloquy we find him highly disillusioned about life. He is present in the Court wearing the black mourning dress, though it is the moment of his mother's wedding ceremony with his uncle. He informs us that only nearly two months have passed, but his mother is already remarried. Considering the advanced years of his mother, he judges this desire for remarriage as nothing but a flaw in the flesh. So, he generalises that the flesh harbours the potentiality for sin. Thereby he wants to have his own bodily existence evaporated, as body will turn him into a sinner. This conclusion therefore is not far from the prevalent Christian theology which held the body to be the shelter-house of sin, and for which we later on hear Cleopatra considering her bodily existence as "baser life" (*AC* 5.2. 285). Hamlet is both repulsed and revulsed at the remarriage, which Eliot and others think to be the reason for his indecision. Hamlet is asked to take revenge on his uncle, but his revulsion is against his mother whom he cannot make the subject of his revenge, and thus an imbalance (lack of objective correlative) is created in the play between the natural direction of the protagonist's emotion and the imposed direction. Thus, the First Soliloquy is set in an unpleasant family atmosphere which leaves the son mentally distracted. It can be assumed that the First Soliloquy hints at a situation complicated enough in itself to develop Hamlet as a tragic hero. Because, by any standard, an elderly mother's hasty remarriage with her own brother-in-law provides not inadequately a theme for a tragedy. Shakespeare always has a

few cards up his sleeve. The Ghost's existence is let known to Hamlet, and sooner than later, he himself comes to encounter it, the outcome of which is of the most harrowing kind, as he is let into the secret that his present step-father is the killer of his own father - there are more things in heaven and earth indeed than we dream of . Hamlet's already piqued situation is compounded manifold as to what will he do, where will he go? The Second Soliloquy speaks about his pledge, the pledge that he has to avenge his father's death. A brother has killed a brother, the living son of the dead brother will have to accomplish the act of revenge. In the background of this plot is lurking, as Jenkins and others have highlighted, the primordial story of fratricide, Cain killing Abel, and for it what happened is unimportant, because the crime is to be righted, anyway. In this play, the killing is done for the throne and for the woman of the murdered brother, but the woman has a grown-up son, a thoughtful university graduate. He will avenge. The responsibility is thrust on him that he will right the wrong. Does he feel competent enough to do so? That is the rub. Not that competence is lacking, but something more metaphysical in nature is gnawing at his heart. The First Player comes, delivers the Hecuba-speech, and gives him the reason why he should do it. He can take the revenge, but he will not. Or, he cannot take the revenge. Why, why, why? Coleridge calls it melancholia, a constitution, naturally apathetic to action - and this in no way is an ordinary action, this is killing a man, or rather killing a king. Bradley disagrees with Coleridge saying that Hamlet should not be seen as suffering from any constitutional - mental or physical - disease, rather his inability to accomplish the act of revenge should be attributed to a moral dilemma. Whence comes this moral dilemma, Bradley as such does not explain, and we will have to wait for Prosser and Edwards's comments to substantiate Bradley's view. In the meantime, Hamlet has let us know through the Third Soliloquy that he is wasting his time. He is a rogue and peasant slave. The First Player has shed tears for Hecuba, a fictitious character, whereas he is being cowardly doing nothing when he knows whose life he should take. The self-reproaches of this soliloquy are enough to protest that Hamlet is genuinely missing on his chances. But is he actually? We have previously noted that he uses his soliloquies to deceive us about his real intentions. Here is one example. Because until now we have hardly seen him having any

scope to avenge the death of his father, and, probably we would not be aware of any such delay if he did not tell us so. The last part of the soliloquy attests to the fact that he has all along been trying to find the right way to revenge, and this cancels out largely the reason for self-accusation. So, the conceiving of the idea of the playlet to catch the conscience of the King reveals the fact that Hamlet has not trusted the Ghost so far. Why should he? He is a graduate from the University of Wittenberg, the same University as his famous fictitious predecessor, Dr Faustus, had his degree from; so he will doubt. Believing a Ghost is like believing a dream. Do we not remember, how Partelote in Chaucer's *The Nun's Priest's Tale* asks her husband, Chauntecleer, not to believe in dreams. Shakespeare breaks with the dramatic tradition here by making the Ghost of Hamlet a suspect. Because all other ghosts on the stage before it were taken for granted by the Elizabethans. We agreed with Edwards, as he analysed the Hamletean doubt from a Kierkegaardian point of view, asking who guarantees that the Ghost is an agent from heaven. The playlet 'The Murder of Gonzago' takes place, incorporating a passage from Hamlet reproducing the circumstances in which King Hamlet died, in order to verify the words of the Ghost in relation to his uncle's murder of his father. And Claudius is startled, orders the play closed, leaves the stage, and Hamlet's mother summons him (Hamlet) for clarification of his behaviour. As he goes to meet her, he delivers his fifth soliloquy announcing that he will do it (the killing), and if need be, he will drink hot blood to bolster his courage, which, however, shows by contrast his very lack of fitness to do the act of murder. From the point of view of the stage, this was quite conventional for a would-be killer to utter oaths and invoke infernal powers. We see both the Macbeths doing it. Then, he remembers his pledge to the Ghost that he would not be cruel to his mother. He softens his rage to the point of speaking daggers to her but using none. Then, on his way, he finds the culprit genuflected before the altar. We said that Claudius's soliloquy at this point is essential to let the audience see his confessing to his own guilt, so that Hamlet will be absolved of the sin of homicide. So far as the audience's moral bearing is concerned, it is now relieved of any burden of sin regarding endorsing Hamlet's future act of homicide. But it is Hamlet who does not still feel his conscience free to do the act. Bradley thinks that his inability at this point compounds the problems

and leads to many more unwarranted deaths. He does not even accept Hamlet's excuses forwarded in the Sixth Soliloquy as genuine. The criticism that Hamlet procrastinates finally gets grounded here. Why does Hamlet delay? We have made plenty of references to Prosser's study which prove that revenge, particularly private revenge, was not approved by the Elizabethans. Though it does not mean that the Elizabethan plays enacted the revenge theme any less, but the playwrights and thinkers, like Shakespeare and Bacon, could not but feel dissatisfied about this convention. And, in *Hamlet*, Shakespeare takes the theme of revenge to its fullest explication revealing all its limitations, as well as the way out of it. The way out is also a problem, as it requires that the revenge will be allowed, but it will be sanitised. What is the way to make an act of revenge sanctified? Edwards lends his insight at this point, and says that Hamlet sees a divine endorsement, a divinity in the fall of a sparrow, a divinity that is shaping our ends, in the fact of his being accidentally able to come back to Denmark. The return from the sea gives him this confidence that his conscience will now not object to his killing Claudius - "is't not perfect conscience / To quit him with this arm" (5.2.68-9)? Hamlet, therefore, finally reaches a point where he thinks he has received the green signal from the higher authority to go for the killing. Even at this point, however, Shakespeare has doubts about whether Hamlet can be made to feel absolutely certain about his action. Shakespeare maybe suggesting that we can probably aspire after a divine guidance without ever being sure whether it will at all be translated onto our plane. That is why, in *Hamlet* the later events happen in such a way that Hamlet does not have to kill Claudius deliberately, he is just forced to kill him, though many think that his pouring down the potion through Claudius's throat after he has already hurt him does smack of the crude revenger the finest version of which he is.

## Othello

Iago and Othello are the only soliloquists in *Othello*[1]. Iago has seven soliloquies and Othello four. Iago's soliloquies have the following sequence: 1.3.375-96; 2.1.285-311; 2.2.44-57; 2.3.327-53; 2.3.372-78 (actually, extension of the previous soliloquy); 3.3.325-37; 4.1.44-8; while Othello's appear at 3.3.262-81; 4.2.21-24; 5.2.1-22, and 5.2.100-09. Othello's first soliloquy comes not until Iago has made his fifth soliloquy, a rather considerable delay for a hero to do so, which, however, is indicative of the fact that Othello starts giving soliloquies only when he is beguiled by Iago into taking Desdemona as an adulteress. That he takes Desdemona's debauchery (as supposed by him) as an act against moral justice and, because of it, himself as the moral agent to correct it, thus viewing the murder of Desdemona as morally justified, are the issues he elaborates in his penultimate soliloquy, "It is the cause, it is the cause, my soul"(5.2.1-22).

Iago's first soliloquy (1.3.375-96) begins just after he has induced Roderigo into melting his purse for him so that the latter can gain him the love of Desdemona. In fact the dialogue that precedes this soliloquy can be considered as a dress rehearsal for Iago in the act of seducing people, which will later on be fully materialised in the great seduction scene (3.3), when Othello will be duped. Here, in the dialogue, Roderigo, seeing that Othello has married Desdemona, declares, "I will incontinently drown myself" (1.3.35). Iago takes the charge of the situation, and, by way of convincing Roderigo that he should rather think of weaning Desdemona away from Othello than drown himself, forwards his reasons in two long speeches in prose (1.3.319 -32, and 1.3.334 - 60 respectively) that give testimony to his psychological make-up. In order to understand the motive behind his first soliloquy, these two speeches can be brought under scrutiny.

In the first speech, his argument is that it is our will that defines our actions. 'Virtue', in his opinion, in itself is nothing but a 'fig' (1.3.319), and it is what we call virtue *is* virtue. Though it briefly reminds us of Hamlet's speech, ". . . there is nothing good or bad

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[1] *Othello* as in *The Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works*. General Editors: Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1988). All quotations refer to this text.

but thinking makes it so" (2.2.251-2), or of Falstaff's, "What is in that word 'honour'"(1 *Hen IV*, 5.1.134), Iago's idea is based on a sustained exegesis on the relationship between will and passion.

> Virtue? A fig! 'Tis in ourselves that we are thus or thus. Our bodies are our gardens, to the which our wills are gardeners; so that if we will plant nettles or sow lettuce, set hyssop and weed up thyme, supply it with one gender of herbs or distract it with many, either to have it sterile with idleness or manured with industry, why, the power and corrigible authority of this lies in our wills. If the beam of our lives had not one scale of reason to peise ['poise', ed. M.R. Ridley, Arden Shakespeare] another of sensuality, the blood and baseness of our natures would conduct us to most preposterous conclusions. But we have reason to cool our raging motions, our carnal stings, our unbitted lusts; whereof I take this that you call love to be a sect or scion. (1.3.318 -32)

Thus our body is like a garden on which our will works as a gardener. 'You reap, as you sow' is the motto of Iago's speech. In fact it is so if his remarks in the last scene of the play can be considered here. To Emilia's query whether he told Othello that his wife was false (5.2.180), he replies in the most matter-of-fact manner that he said what he thought, and did not say more than what Othello found to be true: "I told him what I thought, and told no more / Than what he found himself was apt and true" (5.2.183-4). This is a real villainous utterance in that he can acquit himself of the onus of ruining Othello. At the same time, he recognises reason to be the controlling force over our otherwise unbridled passion. It is to be understood from some seventeenth century studies that the will-passion relationship was not as simplified as Iago suggests, but rather the view was that there was a higher level of passion which was more reasonable than the will which should govern the lower passion.[2] In Iago's speech there is no recognition of the difference between higher passion and lower passion.

[2] Basil Willey, *The Seventeenth Century Background* (Chatto and Windus, London, 1934), see Chapter 1.

In this regard, it is difficult to agree with what Campbell has to say on this passage.

> It is thus that the villain is defined. Will is directed to the gaining of ends set by passion and judged by reason. The passion which escapes reason and leads men to their destruction is the passion which marks the tragic hero. But the passion which sets the ends and has the means judged by reason is the passion which we have already seen is mortal sin. And such is the passion that has brought the judgment and the will into its service in Iago and in the other villains. In Roderigo even there is still a fight between passion and reason; in Iago there is no fight, for the higher is made to serve the lower. [3]

She seems to hold that Iago is suggesting that will is only to be made to serve the baser ends of passion. Iago is rather open about it, because he does not mean to say will *is* to serve passion but that it *may be* directed to serve passion. Though in his case he will employ 'will' for baser ends. The point, however, is that Iago views 'love' to be the outcome of a compromise between passion and will: "It is merely a lust of the blood and a permission of the will" (1.3.334-5). Thus, love depending on the lust of blood will be active as long as that lust sustains, which means, from Iago's point of view, the only love possible is the physical love. Therefore, love is temporary and exchangeable. He urges Roderigo to "Put money in thy purse" (1.3.339), under the conviction that Desdemona will soon change her mind because of two reasons: that Othello is elderly and she is young, and that he is a Moor - an outsider to the Venetian culture.

> I say, put money in thy purse. It cannot be long that Desdemona should continue her love to the Moor - put money in thy purse - nor he his to her. It was a violent commencement in her, and thou shalt see an answerable

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[3] Lily B. Campbell, *Shakespeare's Tragic Heroes: Slaves of Passion* (London: Methuen & Comp, 1982 rpt), p. 157.

> sequestration - but put money in thy purse. These Moors are changeable in their wills - fill thy purse with money. The food that to him now is as luscious as locusts shall be to him shortly as bitter as coloquintida. She must change for youth. When she is sated with his body, she will find the error of her choice. Therefore put money in thy purse. If thou wilt needs damn thyself, do it a more delicate way than drowning. Make all the money thou canst. If sanctimony and a frail vow betwixt an erring barbarian and a super-subtle Venetian be not too hard for my wits and all the tribe of hell, thou shalt enjoy her; therefore make money. A pox o' drowning thyself - it is clean out of the way. Seek thou rather to be hanged in compassing thy joy than to be drowned and go without her. (1.3.334-60)

Thus, according to Iago, Othello's age and race will be the factors that will soon make Desdemona change her partner. From these two speeches we find a comprehensive picture of Iago. He is a young man ("I ha' looked upon the world for four times seven years," (1.3.311-2)) about the city with much insight into human nature. His analysis of Desdemona's psychology or the Moor's for that reason, disproved though it will be by the later events of the play, is still soundly based on a superb understanding of society. That is, if we were to suppose that Iago was absent from the play, we would still analyse Desdemona and Othello's love as something of a mismatch on grounds which would not be too different from those mentioned by Iago as likely to surface and undo it any moment. Suppose that the later events like Iago's villainy, Cassio's falling out of grace, and finally Desdemona's murder were never to happen, would one still not forward the same set of reasons as Iago's about the sensitive aspects of their marriage tie: "These Moors are changeable in their wills," or, "When she is sated with his body, she will find the error of her choice." Iago at this point does not appear to be a villain, but as a man with a hard-broiled sense of practicality, and, though we see his potential as a villain as emerging, we cannot perceive by how much he will defeat our sense of probability. It is noticeable that the reasons he feeds Roderigo with for a possible break between Othello and Desdemona are all drawn on cultural differences, which therefore should be deemed

as constituting the predominant factor in analysing the tragedy of *Othello*. His attempt at fattening his own purse by taking advantage of Roderigo's gullibility also falls in line since Iago's character is partly built on the traditional model of the Devil, one of whose manifold functions was to extort people for financial gains. The Devil was a motivated agent.

Leah Scragg argues that the dramatic tradition from which Iago's character may have developed goes back as far as the York Cycle (1362 and 1376 until 1586) where the Devil was a popular figure. By studying such plays as *Mankind* (1465-70), *Mind, Will and Understanding* (1450-1500), and *The Temptation of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ by Satan (1538)*, he shows that the Devil in all these plays acts as a seducer, a "motivated antagonist of Mankind, the moral being devoted to his spiritual destruction."[4] After running a debate whether it is to the Vice or to the Devil that we should look for Iago's ancestry, Scragg concludes that it is to the Devil (who is shown to be a motivated agent on the stage) and not to the Vice (an unmotivated allegorical character) that Iago should belong:

> If, therefore, the characteristics Iago displays were derived from an earlier figure it seems extremely likely that it is to the Devil rather than the Vice that he is indebted, and that far from being a basically motiveless, amoral figure, he is a motivated being, engaged in the pursuit of some kind of revenge.[5]

Roderigo leaves the stage to Iago with the words, "I'll sell all my land" (1.3.374), harping on which the latter begins his soliloquy:

> Thus do I ever make my fool my purse
> For I mine own gained knowledge should profane
> If I would time expend with such a snipe

[4] Leah Scragg, *Shakespeare Survey 6*, p. 53.
[5] Scragg, p. 56.

But for my sport and profit. I hate the Moor,
And it is thought abroad that 'twixt my sheets
He has done my office. I know not if't be true,
But I, for mere suspicion in that kind,
Will do as if for surety. He holds me well:
The better shall my purpose work on him.
Cassio's a proper man. Let me see now,
To get his place, and to plume up my will
In double knavery - how, how? Let's see.
After some time to abuse Othello's ears
That he is too familiar with his wife;
He hath a person and a smooth dispose
To be suspected, framed to make women false.
The Moor is of a free and open nature,
That thinks men honest that but seem to be so,
And will as tenderly be led by th' nose
As asses are.
I ha't. It is ingendered. Hell and night
Must bring this monstrous birth to the world's light. (1.3.375-96)

In this soliloquy, Iago says clearly, as he has already told Roderigo in the previous dialogue, that he hates the Moor because he has adulterated his wife, Emilia.

.... I hate the Moor,
And it is thought abroad that 'twixt my sheets
He has done my office. (1.3. 378-80)

From the first four lines, we come to know about his criteria for people he likes to associate with. Since he provides sketches of other characters - narrated almost in

graphic terms - as well as he unravels his plans, this soliloquy is an expository soliloquy.[6] He seems to have a definite idea about his intellectual superiority over others. He otherwise shuns Roderigo's company as mere wastage of time, though at the moment he is playing patient. His ploy is to gull Roderigo with the hope that one day he will enjoy Desdemona. On that count he has been receiving money from Roderigo. On Elizabethan stage the Machiavells used to take up stratagems in which they ensured that their inferiors gave them all-out support in working out their ploys either out of fear or grief. Lorenzo, in *The Spanish Tragedy*, does use Pedringano and Sebastian in carrying out his villainous plans. In *The Duchess of Malfi* Bosola is paid by the Aragon brothers to oversee the Duchess, and in *Hamlet*, Claudius employs first Polonius, then Rosencrants and Guildenstern, and finally Laertes to do acts of villainy on Hamlet, while Hamlet himself starts a counter-conspiracy against Claudius through Horatio. As regards Iago's use of Roderigo for his purpose, he hatches a plot in sheer 'double knavery'(1.3.386): he will continuously drop hints to Othello about Desdemona's possible slip with Cassio, and then Roderigo, who is "a snipe" for his "sport and profit"(1.3.377-8) will be used to upstage a brawl with Cassio so that the latter is dismissed from lieutenancy - a post coveted by Iago himself. Later on, we find Cassio unfolding the whole connivance to Othello and others: ". . . that he [Iago] made him [Roderigo] / Brave me upon the watch, whereon it came / That I was cast" (5.2.334-6).

Iago's plotting develops step by step. He is both cautious and flexible in picking up his tricks and change them in accordance with the changing circumstances. Ridley rightly suggests that Iago is not "a long-term strategist," but his "plot develops as it goes along," and "some moves in it ... are forced on him."[7]

In four words, "I hate the Moor," he repeats his dislike for Othello. Why? And, he improvises an idea here that it has come out that Othello has adulterated his wife. He does not know whether it is true, but he would like to believe in it, as it gives him a handle to his enterprise against Othello. He tries to visualise the situation, and thinks that

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[6] Morris LeRoy Arnold, *The Soliloquies of Shakespeare: A Study in Technic* (The Columbia University Press, 1911), p. 62.

[7] M. R. Ridley, ed. *Othello* (The Arden Edition; Methuen, 1958), *Intro.* pp. lxi-lxii.

since Othello holds him in great estimate it will be easier for him to work on him. On the other hand Cassio is also a gentle man. He pauses: "Let me see now" (1.3.384). And then the idea presents itself to him. Yes, Cassio can be removed, and he can push his own case forward. But, "how, how"(1.3.386)? Therein lies the rub. He has got the plot only half thought-out. The triangular plot of jealousy has not yet dawned upon him. But in the next line it does: "Let's see"(1.3.386). He will slowly (note, there is no hurry) load Othello's ears (who "is of a free and open nature," (1.3.391)) with the unholy suggestion that Casssio and Desdemona were known well to each other. And Cassio's character?: "He hath a person and a smooth dispose / To be suspected, framed to make women false" (1.3.389-0). His manipulative vein, which a little while ago was noticeable in his stated plan regarding Roderigo, is confirmed in his intention to lead Othello by the nose like an ass. Then the whole proceeding of the plot, which for the audience lies in the womb of future, becomes palpably present to him: "I ha't. It is ingendered" (1.3.395). Iago's taste for the copulative and gestational process ("an old black ram / Is tupping your white ewe," (1.1.88-9) is once more evident here, but that is for a "monstrous birth" (1.3.396) of the plot.

It may be seen that Iago has pronounced a motive for his action. That is, he hates the Moor. There is no reason to think that he is alone to show this attitude. The first scene of the play is all-exciting because it suddenly becomes known that the Moor has seduced a Venetian woman - an event that is to shake the whole of Venice to its foundation. And that event straightway is informed with a cultural difference. We mark that Iago is not alone in conducting the vituperative rhetorical onslaught on Othello. Roderigo, feeling wretched at the incident, joins him ("Your daughter ... hath made a gross revolt, / Tying her duty, beauty, wit, and fortunes / In an extravagant and wheeling stranger" (1.1.135-8)), and so does Brabantio inasmuch as his disbelief goes ( If it were not for magic, would Desdemona "Run from her guardage to the sooty bosom / Of such a thing as thou" (1.2.71-2)), - all of them, and later, the Senators along with the Duke make it clear through their gestures that they are dealing with an uncomfortable issue. But in the face of the war expediency, they smooth out the subject.

Iago's hating of the Moor thus originates in the cultural bias. He believes the bond between the lovers will soon be snapped, because the emotion in Desdemona was fired by carnal desire, and when it will die down, the cultural differences will resurface. And, he thinks, Cassio, being a Venetian and a charming officer too, will be the likely choice for her. In addition, Othello has recently given Cassio promotion over him (this fact he has not yet mentioned, but will soon). And, as if to give a stronger twist to his motive, he also harbours on the fact that Othello may have defiled his wife. So, revenge is to be sought on that count too. Thus Iago starts with citing one motive (his hatred of the Moor), but as he goes along other conjunctive motives seem to build up. The motives are interdependent, and success on one count leads to success on another.

Yet great critics like Coleridge and Bradley have found themselves unable to accept the given motives as Iago's genuine motives. Coleridge, characterising Iago as a motive-hunter and his malignity as motiveless, finally views Iago's action as embodying, as paraphrased by Bradley, "a disinterested love of evil, or a delight in the pain of others."[8] Bradley, however, rather thinks that Iago is motivated towards villainy by a wounded pride. When a man feels that he is superior to others but is not recognised as that, then he takes recourse to torturing others by words or action.

> [The wounded pride] seems to be the unconscious motive of many acts of cruelty which evidently do not spring chiefly from ill-will, and which therefore sometimes horrify and puzzle us most . It is often this that makes a man bully the wife or children of whom he is fond. The boy who torments another boy, as we say, 'for no reason', or who without any hatred for frogs tortures a frog, is pleased with his victim's pain, not from any disinterested love of evil or pleasure in pain, but mainly because this pain is the unmistakable proof of his own power over his victim. So it is with Iago. His thwarted sense of superiority wants satisfaction. What fuller satisfaction could it find than the consciousness that he is the master of the General who has undervalued him and of the rival who has been preferred

[8] Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy*, p. 171.

> to him; that these worthy people, who are so successful and popular and stupid, are mere puppets in his hands, but living puppets, who at the motion of his finger must contort themselves in agony while all the time they believe that he is their one true friend and comforter? It must have been an ecstasy of bliss to him.[9]

The power which Bradley says Iago enjoys exerting upon others has been interpreted by Greenblatt as being the factor which is materialised through constant improvisation. Greenblatt's theory is that power (social and political) sustains through some effective maneuvering of situations to the advantage of those who are in power. This maneuvering has to be improvised to a great extent to keep intact the image of power. He thus identifies improvisation as the central Renaissance mode of behaviour[10], and claims that Iago is the supreme example of rhetoric improvisation. Pointing to Iago's first soliloquy, Greenblatt says that "Shakespeare goes out of his way to emphasise the improvised nature of the villain's plot."[11]

The whole play, according to Greenblatt, is concerned with a fascinating style of telling tales, and Desdemona succumbs completely to the narrative self-fashioning of Othello.[12] He becomes a tale to her. The process of fictionalisation is so strong that it provides Iago with the opportunity to be the greatest improviser. He celebrates his victory upon his skills to ensnare others. Greenblatt defines Iago in a way not different from Bradley's:

> Like Jonson's Mosca, Iago is finally aware of himself as an improviser and revels in his ability to manipulate his victims, to lead them by the nose like asses, to possess their labour without their ever being capable of grasping the relation in which they are enmeshed. Such is the relation Iago

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[9] Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy* (MacMillan), p. 187.
[10] Stephen Greenblatt, "The Improvisation of Power," in *Shakespearean Tragedy* ed., John Drakakis (Longman Critical Series), p. 160.
[11] Greenblatt, p. 163, p.104.

[12] Greenblatt, p. 164.

> establishes with virtually every character in the play, from Othello and Desdemona to such minor figures as Montano and Bianca.[13]

Thus, both Bradley and Greenblatt have complementary views regarding Iago's motives. Bradley thinks that Iago's injured pride propels his desire to grab a commanding situation over others which also provides him with a sadistic pleasure, while Greenblatt extends the idea saying that Iago maintains his power through constant improvisation in the form of telling lies, plotting new situations, and gulling people.

Iago's second soliloquy comes at the end of 2.1. Before that we see him making an 'aside' at the dockside in Cyprus while waiting for the arrival of Othello. Desdemona and Cassio are along with him, and it is about their association that he is making the 'aside'.

> He takes her by the palm. Ay, well said - whisper. With as little a web as this will I ensnare as great a fly as Cassio. Ay, smile upon her, do. I will gyve thee in thine own courtship. You say true, 'tis so indeed. If such tricks as these strip you out of your lieutenantry, it had been better you had not kissed your three fingers so oft, which now again you are most apt to play the sir in. Very good, well kissed, an excellent curtsy, 'tis so indeed; yet again your fingers to your lips? Would they were clyster-pipes for your sake. (2.1.170-80)

In this aside he creates his own meanings for a situation and then asks us to accept them. We have to see Cassio and Desdemona exchanging greetings in the most innocuous way. But Iago is placed downstage to make the aside. He wants us to read the situation as a kind of overture to a sexual relationship. He refers to Cassio's fingers as "clyster-pipes" which Ridley explains as a "syringe for a (vaginal) douche."[14] This is Iago's very interpretative power that modifies a reality to his own idea or peculiar vision.

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[13] Greenblatt, p. 164.

[14] Ridley, p. 59.

That is, the realistic vision is turned into a believable illusion by the sheer power of his rendition. Iago interprets the situation not in the way as we see it; however it is to his full credit that though we are aware of the discrepancy, still we cannot deny his point of view. Iago can modify not only the view of others in the play, but also that of the audience. This is more obvious in his dialogue with Roderigo as they are left alone on the stage. When Roderigo, in reply to Iago's "Didst thou not see her paddle with the palm of his hand" (2.1. 253-4)? says that it is merely a gesture of courtesy ("Yes, but that was but courtesy" (2.1.256)), Iago retorts that it is nothing but lechery: "Lechery, by this hand: an index and prologue to the history of lust and foul thoughts" (2.1.257-8). What is courtesy for Roderigo is lechery for Iago, and the former changes his view to the latter's. It may be reasoned that Roderigo does change his view because he is more than willing to, but since in the future scenes we will see Othello also changing his mind under the influence of Iago, we can view this present exercise as a key to understanding Iago's vast manipulative power.

Thus, by the second soliloquy, Iago has visualised the plot. In Cyprus, before the arrival of Othello,s Desdemona and Cassio, left to themselves, become friends. Iago finds in it a chance to frame a story of illicit love. The traditional triangular pattern of love and jealousy takes shape in his mind. But, he needs somebody who will offer him his services. Roderigo is ready to be used. And the Cyprus war, which was looming so large in the first scene, is but all gone to the winds, allowing Othello more time to give to his domestic affairs. But he actually is going to be enmeshed by the triangular plot Iago has set for him. And, then Iago speaks with the happy tone of a man who has entrapped his enemy:

> That Cassio loves her, I do well believe it.
> That she loves him, 'tis apt of great credit.
> The Moor - howbe't that I endure him not -
> Is of a constant, loving, noble nature,
> And I dare think he'll prove to Desdemona
> A most dear husband. Now I do love her too,

Not out of absolute love - though peradventure
I stand accounted for as great a sin -
But partly led to diet my revenge
For that I do suspect the lusty Moor
Hath leapt into my seat, the thought whereof
Doth, like a poisonous mineral, gnaw my inwards;
And nothing can or shall content my soul
Till I am evened with him, wife for wife-
Or failing so, yet that I put the Moor
At least into a jealousy so strong
That judgment cannot cure, which thing to do,
If this poor trash of Venice whom I trace
For his quick hunting stand the putting on,
I'll have our Michael Cassio on the hip,
Abuse him to the Moor in the rank garb -
For I fear Cassio with his nightcap, too -
Make the Moor thank me, love me, and reward me
For making him egregiously an ass,
And practising upon his peace and quiet
Even to madness. 'Tis here, but yet confused .
Knavery's plain face is never seen till used. (2.1.285-311)

Iago's strong belief that Cassio is in love with Desdemona springs from his notion based on cultural difference. Though both Coleridge ( there are no 'veritable negroes'[15]) and Bradley view the racial question in *Othello* as unimportant,[16] sit is also on record that

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[15] Quoted by Dympna Callaghan in her essay, " 'Othello was a white man': properties of race on Shakespeare's stage," in Terence Hawkes, ed. *Alternative Shakespeares, Vol. 2*, (Routledge: London. 1996), p. 193.

[16] Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy* (MacMillan, rpt.1971), p. 152. "To me it appears hopelessly un-Shakespearean. I could as easily believe that Chaucer meant the Wife of Bath for a study of the peculiarities of Somersetshire. I do not mean that Othello's race is a matter of no account. It has, as we shall presently see, its importance in the play. It makes a difference to our idea of him; it makes a difference to the action and catastrophe. But in regard to the essentials of his character it is not important; and if anyone had told

"the spectacle of the pale-skinned woman caught in Othello's black arms has indeed seemed monstrous."[17] Iago is still definite about Othello's sincere love for Desdemona. But then he improvises another reason - totally unthought of before - that since Othello has "leapt into my seat" (2.1.295), he will also love Desdemona to be even with him "wife for wife" (2.1.298). Ridley rightly notes that in this soliloquy Iago is plotting for revenge and instead of showing anger at missed promotion, he is showing sexual jealousy.[18] In the next few lines (299-305), he unfolds his plot, how he will fell Cassio "on the hip" (2.1.304), and then endear himself to the Moor, whom he derogatorily calls "an ass" (2.1.308), and drive him to madness with jealousy. But he still is not sure about what might be Othello's reaction toward such a story: "It's here, but yet confused" (2.1.310).

In the third soliloquy, Iago fixes upon the thing to start his fiendish plot, which is wine.

> If I can fasten but one cup upon him,
> With that which he hath drunk tonight already
> He'll be as full of quarrel and offence
> As my young mistress' dog. Now my sick fool Roderigo,
> Whom love hath turned almost the wrong side out,
> To Desdemona hath tonight caroused
> Potations pottle-deep, and he's to watch.
> Three else of Cyprus - noble swelling spirits
> That hold their honours in a wary distance,
> The very elements of this warlike isle -

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Shakespeare that no Englishman would have acted like the Moor, and had congratulated him on the accuracy of his psychology, I am sure he would have laughed."

[17] See Callaghan op. Cit. " 'Shakespeare shows that the union of a white Venetian maiden and a black Moorish general is from at least one perspective emphatically unnatural. The union is of course a central fact of the play, and to some commentators, the spectacle of the pale-skinned woman caught in Othello's black arms has indeed seemed monstrous. Yet that spectacle is a major source of Othello's emotional power. From Shakespeare's day to the present the sight has titillated and terrified predominantly white audiences' (Vaughan 1994: 51)."

[18] Ridley, p.65.

Have I tonight flustered with flowing cups,
And they watch too. Now 'mongst this flock of drunkards
Am I to put our Cassio in some action
That may offend the isle. (2.3.44-57)

He has already coaxed Cassio into having an extra cup ("Come, lieutenant. I have stoup of wine" (2.3.25-6)), against his will ("Not to-night, good Iago, I have very poor and unhappy brains for drinking" (2.3.30-1)). Cassio's refusal is mild, and Iago becomes sure of Cassio's tipsy nature. He also realises that Cassio is short-tempered like his "mistress' dog" (2.3.47). On the other hand Roderigo is kept well on the ready for doing the needful. So, a confident Iago thus utters: if everything goes well, "My boat sails freely, both with wind and stream" (2.3.59).

The fourth soliloquy by Iago is his infamous "Divinity of hell" speech. This is an example of improvising reasons for self-justification.

And what's he then that says I play the villain,
When this advice is free I give, and honest,
Probal to thinking, and indeed the course
To win the Moor again? For 'tis most easy
Th'inclining Desdemona to subdue
In any honest suit. She's framed as fruitful
As the free elements; and then for her
To win the Moor, wer't to renounce his baptism,
All seals and symbols of redeem'ed sin,
His soul is so enfettered to her love
That she may make, unmake, do what she list,
Even as her appetite shall play the god
With his weak function. How am I then a villain,
To counsel Cassio to this parallel course
Directly to his good? Divinity of hell!

When devils will the blackest sins put on,
They do suggest at first with heavenly shows,
As I do now; for whiles the honest fool
Plies Desdemona to repair his fortune,
And she for him pleads strongly to the Moor,
I'll pour this pestilence into his ear;
That she repeals him for his body's lust,
And by how much she strives to do him good
She shall undo her credit with the Moor.
So will I turn her virtue into pitch,
And out of her own goodness make the net
That shall enmesh them all. (2.3.27-53)

And,

Two things are to be done.
My wife must move for Cassio to her mistress.
I'll set her on.
Myself a while to draw the Moor apart,
And bring him jump when he may Cassio find
Soliciting his wife. Ay, that's the way.
Dull not device by coldness and delay. (2.3.372-8)

Ridley's comment on this soliloquy is worth following:

The plot at last takes specific shape, as Iago brilliantly improvises. The drinking episode was devised to put Cassio in some action that might offend the isle - i.e. it was aimed at discrediting Cassio *as a soldier*, and was part therefore of the 'ousting-Cassio' part of Iago's design. But Cassio's mood, refusing to appeal to Othello's direct (294-6), plays

> straight into Iago's hands, and he seizes his chance in a flash, advising an appeal to Desdemona (305-16). In this soliloquy for the first time he sees his design no longer "confused" but a complete linked chain, and we sense not only his delight at the prospect of revenge, but his sheer intellectual pleasure in a subtle and finished piece of black artistry.[19]

Here Iago makes a virtue of his fault saying that there is no reason he should be considered ill-motived, since he has advised Cassio in good faith to ask Desdemona to plead on his behalf to Othello for his reinstatement. And, Desdemona will be ready to do that as "she's fram'd as fruitful / As the free elements" (3.2.332-3). Then he vindicates his services; "How am I then a villain, / To counsel Cassio to this parallel course, / Directly to his good" (3.2.339-40)? However, this complacent view he himself rejects when he points out in the same breath:

> Divinity of hell: ["Evil, be thou my good"20]
> When devils will the blackest sins put on,
> They do suggest at first with heavenly shows,
> As I do now. (3.2.341-3)

He then gives a graphic description of how he wants to proceed. Desdemona will be approached by Cassio to plead his reinstatement, and the more arduously he does it, the more Desdemona will be moved to plead to Othello, which then will be interpreted by Iago (he will just hint about it) as Desdemona's secret passion for Cassio. Iago will thus " . . . out of her own goodness make the net / That shall enmesh them all" (3.2.352-3).

Noticeable is that "goodness" is the human virtue that will be totally distorted by Iago, and totally destroyed by Othello too.

Roderigo enters, complains about the money that he advanced to Iago as part of the deal in getting Desdemona, but Iago having made no headway so far in the process, asks

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[19] Ridley, p. 86.
[20] Ridley, p. 87.

him to be patient saying he does not work by "witchcraft," but by "wit": "Thou knowest we work by wit, and not by witchcraft" (3.2.362). But as soon as Roderigo makes his exit (l.372), Iago's soliloquy continues in a more hastened tone:

> Some things are to be done,
> My wife must move for Cassio to her mistress,
> I'll set her on. (3.2.372-4)

It is quite uncharacterstic of Iago to sound so tense, though we can understand his tenseness inasmuch as Othello is concerned, who is like a tiger now sleeping but who, if having roused finds himself wrongly handled, will finish off with him first. Othello says about himself: "Of one not easily jealous but, being wrought, / Perplexed in the extreme" (5.2.354-5). From Othello's fury Iago has to ensure his own safety first. Thus Iago's modus operandi is to separate Desdemona from Othello in no time so that he can lead the latter to come upon Cassio and Desdemona suddenly at a moment when "he may Cassio find, / Soliciting his wife" (3.2.375-77).

Iago's next soliloquy (3.3.325-333) is revelatory not of his mind, but of his scheme.

> I will in Cassio's lodging lose this napkin,
> And let him find it. Trifles light as air
> Are to the jealous confirmations strong
> As proofs of holy writ. This may do something.
> The Moor already changes with my poison.
> Dangerous conceits are in their natures poisons,
> Which at the first are scarce found to distaste,
> But, with a little act upon the blood,
> Burn like the mines of sulphur. (3.2.325-33)

He has now so far advanced in his plan that he deems it fit not to rely on any agent other than himself lest Othello should see through his machinations. So, he decides to

carry out the action on his own. This time it is to drop Desdemona's handkerchief (secured to him by his wife, Emilia) at Cassio's chamber, so that when the latter will be seen carrying it, it will provide him (Iago) with the "ocular proof" (3.3.365) that Othello demanded of him to produce:

> No, Iago,
> I'll see before I doubt; when I doubt, prove;
> And on the proof, there is no more but this:
> Away at once with love and jealousy. (3.3.193-6)

Iago is not yet sure what effect the ploy with the handkerchief will come to. But he knows that since the Moor "changes with my poison" (3.3.329), so "a little act upon the blood / [will] Burn like the mines of sulphur" (3.3.332-3).

As Othello enters, Iago comments on his devastated condition:

> Look where he comes, not poppy, nor mandragora,
> Nor all the drowsy syrups of the world,
> Shall ever medicine thee to that sweet sleep
> Which thou owedst yesterday. (3.3.334-7)

Iago's last soliloquy comes in fact when he has completely turned Othello to the belief that he has been cuckolded. But the dramatisation of this scene is once more another distinctive mark of Iago's brilliant improvisations:

> Oth: Hath he said anything?
> Iago: He hath, my lord. But, be you well assured,
> No more than he'll unswear.
> Oth: What hath he said?
> Iago: Faith, that he did . . . I know not what he did.
> Oth: But what?

Iago: Lie. [Note the pun on both lying and lying down]

Oth: With her?

Iago: With her, on her, what you will.

Oth: Lie with her? Lie on her? We say 'lie on her' when they belie her. Lie with her? 'Swounds, that's fulsome! Handkerchief - confessions - handkerchief. To confess and be hanged for his labour. First to be hanged and then to confess! I tremble at it. Nature would not invest herself in such shadowing passion without some instruction. It is not words that shakes me thus. Pish! Noses, ears, and lips! Is't possible? Confess? Handkerchief? O devil! (4.1.29-42)

Thus Iago has got Othello completely deranged. In his wreck, he begins to contemplate hanging Desdemona, and the only evidence he thinks he has is the fact that the handkerchief is now in Cassio's possession. After he has passed out, Iago makes his last soliloquy, the briefest one (4.1.44-8), gleefully telling us that "thus credulous fools are caught" (4.1.43).

It is to be noted that in his soliloquies Iago rather sounds prosaic. He delivers his soliloquies in a matter-of-fact way. He is a stage Machiavel, and in many of his actions he looks comic too. In fact, though *Othello* is a serious tragedy, so far as Iago's character is concerned there is much scope to think that his beguiling of Othello depends as much on having a look at the funny side of life as on hard-broiled villainy. However, against the backdrop of high seriousness of the drama, Iago's freakishness remains subsided, and what becomes all-pervasive is his efficient management of events - as he does in the seduction scene (3.3). His employment of Emilia to get hold of the handkerchief, which she does; his re-enactment of Cassio's supposed dream about Desdemona, and his making Othello see but not hear Cassio talking about Desdemona when he is actually talking about Bianca - are also superb examples of his improvisation, much of the success of which again depends on Othello's faith in him - "honest Iago" repeated for the umpteenth time. In Iago's plotting there is high risk coupled with precariousness as the whole net of conspiracy comes occasionally to a breaking point, and yet for Othello's

stubborn foolishness Iago is luckily saved. Iago's soliloquies give this sense of walking on a tight rope.

On the other hand, Othello makes two soliloquies proper, one at 3.3.262-283 and another at 5.2.1-22, and he gives two more soliloquies, one at 4.1.21-4, which is a filler to allow Emilia to call in Desdemona to him, and another in the last scene (5.2.) after killing Desdemona, when Emilia will be knocking at the door. It may be seen that, except for Othello's "It is the cause, it is the cause, my soul" (5.2.1-22) soliloquy, none of the other soliloquies either by Othello, or, as we have seen, by Iago is pregnant with deeply searching thoughts as may be said about those in *Hamlet* or *Macbeth*. Shakespeare seems to have preferred to inject all the ideas and thoughts of tragic dimension into the dialogues between Othello and Iago, the crowning example of which is the seduction scene (3.3.), and he does it expressly for the purpose of showing the gradual forging of the unholy bond between the two characters, the symbolic expression of which can be detected, again in the same scene, when first Othello kneels down, and Iago, prompted by another villainous impulse, immediately joins him in prayer for the elimination of Cassio and Desdemona. By that time they have pledged to be a pair of devils.

The background to Othello's first soliloquy is this: Iago is already successful in removing Cassio from the post of lieutenancy, and has suggested to Cassio that he should apply himself to Desdemona for the revision of the command, and as the scene between them is taking place Iago craftily leads Othello to a vantage point from where they can watch the supposed lovers meeting secretly (the meeting is not secret, but Iago is making it look like that to Othello). As Othello is already suspicious about Desdemona, he sees things which he wants to see. And, unfortunately seeing Othello appearing Cassio hurriedly takes leave of Desdemona, which is an act in itself innocent, but which can be made meaningful to a credulous husband like Othello. And to increase his credulity further Iago employs his energy. This is what Iago exactly does: when he leads Othello to the scene where Cassio is talking with Desdemona about his reinstatement he breaks into this deliberately spontaneous utterance: "Ha! I like not that" (3.3.33). This comment which apparently seems innocent is enough to startle Othello into a new realisation - something in him is awakened which he cannot name yet, but which is there lying

dormant in his subconscious mind, and which he is going to specify a little later in his first soliloquy. His colour and his age are at the root to cause this doubt in him: "Haply for I am black, / And have not those soft parts of conversation / That chamberers have: or for I am declined / Into the vale of years" (3.3.268-270).

But, for now, he does not want to give room to any such feelings because "when I love thee not, / Chaos is come again" (3.3.92-3). He rather asks Iago, innocence mixed with just the initial doubt, what it is that Iago is saying:

What dost thou say? (3.3.34)

Iago replies, perhaps casting a furtive glance down the way Cassio left:

Nothing, my lord. Or *if*, I know not what. (3.3.35) (Italics mine)

'If' is the key-word used by Iago to slow-poison Othello's mind. The meaning is: I have nothing to say, or if I have to say anything, I don't know what! So, Othello's mind is filled up with worms by this one gesture that weaves through certainty and uncertainty. The process is cancerous: slow and harmless at the beginning, but pervasive and deadly in the end.

Othello tries to ascertain:

Was not that Cassio parted from my wife? (3.3.36)

Iago replies, as if much surprised at both that it was actually Cassio who left the scene and that Othello should actually name him:

Cassio, my lord? No, sure, I cannot think it,
That he would steal away so *guilty-like*
Seeing your coming. (3.3.33-38) (Italics mine)

'Guilty-like' is a value-laden phrase. In Iago's baiting-pattern we must take note of the preponderance of the subtle, but mean, hints dropped on and off which apparently look casual and neutral, but given Othello's frame of mind they prove to be destructive. So, after planting this doubt about Cassio, Iago goes about feeling Othello's pulse further, and this time his question is sequential:

> Did Michael Cassio, when you wooed my lady,
> Know of your love? (3.3.96-7)

In reply, Othello informs him that Cassio not only knew her but also acted as a go-between. "Indeed" (3.3.103)? Iago asks. While we are quickly reminded of Merdian's famous reply to Cleopatra that he could not *indeed* do it *in deed*, creating one of the most delightful puns in Shakespeare (*AC* 1.5.15-6), we know that Iago insinuates Merdian's later sense here, thus aggravating the lump of unease in Othello's throat further. Othello wants to know whether Iago does not think Cassio is honest. Iago's ambiguous reply, "Honest, my lord" (3.3.107)? throws him into a sea of confusion, and observing his restlessness Iago grimly suggests: "Men should be what they seem" (3.3.131), implying that Cassio is not what he seems. Pinning down Othello further while he is wriggling in dismay, Iago gives another turn to the screw by pointing out another possibility that Cassio's probable debauchery may have been patronised by Desdemona herself. That is, Desdemona, like Cassio, may seem what she is not. And, Othello must not forget that she has already deceived her father.

> She did deceive her father, marrying you,
> And when she seemed to shake and fear your looks
> She loved them most. (3.3.210-2)

Iago still continues heating up Othello along the cultural line:

> Ay, ther's the point; as, to be bold with you,

Not to affect many propos'ed matches
Of her own clime, complexion, and degree,
Whereto we see in all things nature tends.
Foh, one may smell in such a will most rank,
Foul disproportions, thoughts unnatural!
But pardon me. I do not in position
Distinctly speak of her, though I may fear
Her will, recoiling to her better judgment,
May fall to match you with her country forms
And happily repent. (3.3.233-43)

Iago, from the beginning has thought that Desdemona will recoil to her better judgment, but he has now injected it into Othello as a valid reason. Thus when Othello makes his first soliloquy, he almost speaks in the light of what Iago has insinuated to him.

This fellow's of exceeding honesty,
And knows all qualities with a learned spirit
Of human dealings. If I do prove her haggard,
Though that her jesses were my dear heart-strings
I'd whistle her off and let her down the wind
To prey at fortune. Haply for I am black,
And have not those soft parts of conversation
That chamberers have; or for I am declined
Into the vale of years - yet that's not much -
She's gone. I am abused, and my relief
Must be to loathe her. O curse of marriage,
That we can call these delicate creatures ours
And not their appetites! I had rather be a toad
And live upon the vapour of a dungeon

Than keep a corner in the thing I love
For others' uses. Yet 'tis the plague of great ones;
Prerogatived are they less than the base.
'Tis destiny unshunnable, like death.
Even then this fork'ed plague is fated to us
When we do quicken. (3.3.262-281)

Othello gives compliments to Iago for his better understanding of people and society. Which people and which society? The Venetians are Iago's own people and Venice his own society, on account of which he naturally enjoys the privileges of a native denied to Othello as a foreigner: "I know our country disposition well" (3.3.205). Iago and Othello forge this quick bond on mutually exclusive reasons too. Othello is both a convert and immigrant, and has married a white Christian girl. He has this problem of acclimatisation. He is conversant with war affairs, but not with domestic life. Naturally the need in him is to find a guide - friend-philosopher type - who will show him the ways of the world. That is why, Iago to him is 'honest' Iago. On the other hand, for crafty Iago nobody can be a better subject to suit his villainous ploys than Othello, who to him is like an ass to be led by the nose, "For making him egregiously an ass" (2.1.308). Their chemistry clicks. The cultural question is there never to be forgotten by Iago, and never to escape Othello's consciousness either. As Othello's suspicion about Desdemona thickens Iago remains unfailing in reminding him of the basic problem: "Her will, recoiling to her better judgment, / May fall to match you with her country forms / And happily repent" (3.3.241-3).

The sense that women are wives who can be adulteresses also has now taken a place in Othello's imagination. Thus he thinks that marriage only covers the outward identity of women while their inner identity goes against the very code of marriage. "O curse of marriage, / That we can call these delicate creatures ours / And not their appetites" (3.3.272-4). Making Othello conscious about this two-fold identity of women - as delicate creatures and as creatures with appetites - is Iago's key contribution to the future tragic events. Presumably, before this, Othello had conceived of women as a unified

creature, but through this soliloquy he has unfolded his own horrendous discovery of women in her putative two-fold identity. Iago thus seduces Othello, as Helen Gardner suggests, into a "loss of faith."[21] Othello is inwardly suffering from a confidence-crisis evident in such frequent phrases as his face being "begrimed and black" (3.3.392), and, as the events proceed further, when Iago makes himself present to inform him more about the way the Venetian women behave, in his feeling that the ground under him has given way. "I know our country disposition well. / In Venice they do let God see the pranks / They dare not show their husbands" (3.3.205-7), an 'honest' Iago tells him, and the sky falls over his head. Desdemona might be seeing another man! So, the factors of race and age, which did not disturb him during the courtship, now come to the front and crack his confidence. He knows that all several facts of breeding, age, profession and culture bespeak of a mismatch between himself and Desdemona, and therefore he never feels assured with himself. Rejecting Bradley's attempt at toning down the racial question as unimportant for critical judgment on the play, Honigmann asserts that it is of supreme importance.

> Othello lacks the insurmountable feeling that ties lovers together and should have shored up his faith in Desdemona: he lacks it because of the racial gap between them, which is such that his instinct cannot reassure him that he truly and profoundly *knows* Desdemona. Iago perceives this insecurity, and stresses that Othello cannot know how Othello has no answer; or rather, he concedes the point. 'I know our country disposition well', Iago begins (he implies 'you don't know it, as you don't belong to *our* country'): 'In Venice they do let God see the pranks.'
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> ...The first phase of the 'temptation' draws to its crisis when Iago dares to point a slow, unmoving finger at Othello's secret insecurity, his Moorishness (3.3.232ff), which severely damages his faith in himself. Now, reminded of his own distance from Desdemona in 'clime,

[21] Quoted by E. A. J. Honigmann in *Shakespeare: Seven Tragedies: The dramatist's manipulation of response* (The MacMillan Press Limited, 1976), p. 95.

> complexion and degree', he admits to himself in so many words that Iago *knows more*, and his inner timbers begin to part.[22] (Italics, the critic's)

The racial question is therefore unavoidable. First, the politics of skin can be brought into discussion. Though Honigmann suggests that "Othello differs from Shakespeare's other tragic heroes in suffering from an ethnic and cultural split,"[23] he does not specify whether this split concerns the colour of the skin too. Critics seem to find themselves in a paradox regarding Othello's complexion. Having committed themselves to Iago's "an old black ram"(1.1.88) reference in their analyses of Othello they go on reading the play with a colour bias, but the conclusions they come out with happen to be based on problems arising from a conflict between two cultures, a conflict defined by polarised values and so on, and not necessarily from Othello's having a black skin. When Andr'e Green, for example, gives a psychoanalytical reading of the play he centres his argument not on Othello's skin but on his having a different cultural background. He points out that a dazed Brabantio could not but believe that Othello might have seduced Desdemona by sorcery ("thou hast practised on her with foul charms," and "a practiser / Of arts inhibited and out of warrant" (1.3.74 & 79-80)), an oriental practice, which is later on to be concretised through the handkerchief used by Othello as a fetish to prolong the efficacy of desire.[24] Thus the play is divided between the Oriental and the Occidental much in the same way as *Antony and Cleopatra* is divided between Rome (West) and Egypt (East). Similarly, as Antony becomes a symbolic figure in whom the values of diametrically opposite cultures both clash and coexist, so does Othello - a convert, but not yet a convert, a Venetian, but not yet a Venetian. Thus, Othello's blackness does not seem to be the matter of primary importance, though his race is. The suggestion is, as we quoted Bradley as having implied it earlier, that Shakespeare could have written the same kind of tragedy with a Hispanic or a brown Othello as his central character. Moreover, the portrait of the Moorish Ambassador who visited the court of Elizabeth in 1600 does not

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[22] Honigmann, p. 95.
[23] Honigmann, p. 94.
[24] Andr'e Green, "*Othello*: A tragedy of Conversion. Black Magic and White Magic," in John Drakakis, ed. *Shakespearean Tragedy*, (Longman Critical Readers, Longman, 1992), p. 328.

show a black face, but rather an Arab face.[25] The Moor is historically supposed to be a figure of mixed Arab race hailing from North Africa. Thus Othello's blackness can be viewed not so much representing a negro-protagonist as demonstrating the white cultural values in which blackness is rather seen as the primordial symbol of black as evil, as we find in the suggestion that Macbeth's heart is black as he is evil. In fact, Rosalie L. Colie traces the origin of Othello's blackness and Desdemona's fairness to be rooted in the medieval and renaissance lyric traditions and shows that the metaphors of black as evil and white as fair were standard literary usages:

> Desdemona is fair, within and without. The less fair, less spiritually refined qualities attributed to the standard courtly lover-poet have in fact been written into Othello's background and appearance. He *is* black, and, when pressed, the Venetians remind him of it. Though we are led to expect the opposite. Othello's external blackness turns out to match one segment of his inner life, as well of course as his external behaviour to his wife. By taking literally conventional fairness and darkness, Shakespeare has given a new dimension to an artificial arrangement so trite as to appear meaningless: part of the shock involved in this marriage relies upon literary as well as upon social conventions.[26]

In a very informative article, Dympna Callaghan argues that that the racial otherness and the other gender were both subjected to the male-controlled values. Blackness appeared on the Elizabethan stage not as the thing itself, but as a representation of the thing. The representational aim was to project negritude, to introduce values which were to show cultural otherness. The racial otherness was shown to indicate marginalisation of it by the dominant white male race, as well as the allurement and attraction of the exotic culture. She contends that though there "was no paucity of Africans in England" on stage,

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[25] Plate XVI in Kenneth Muir and Philip Edwards, eds. *Aspects of Othello*: Articles reprinted from *Shakespeare Survey* (Cambridge University Press, 1971).

[26] Rosalie L. Colie, *Shakespeare's Living Art* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1974), pp. 148-9.

however, "they were always depicted by white actors."[27] Black people were frequently shown for exhibition in public, presumably on payment of entry fee, but on stage the performance of black characters was taken not so much to show actual black actors as to project what she calls negritude. In defining the sense of otherness in the Renaissance England, she emphasises that blackness was viewed as the matrix in which all aspects of difference could merge: "The capacity of blackness simultaneously to intensify, subsume, and absorb all aspects of otherness is a specifically Renaissance configuration of othering."[28] And the black face, black skin as well as the white face (she refers to a modern production of *Othello*, where Olivier was blackened, "silk-buffed to a sheen" for his performance of Othello, against Billie Whitelaw as Desdemona "who was covered from head to toe with white Pan-Cake"[29]) were mere stage properties which were taken up by white actors for respective character-roles. She also views that the racial otherness, which was representational, had been projected in the same way as the gender otherness had been. That is, the Elizabethan approach toward gender was as representational as its outlook on the race. She refers to the marginalisation of women in the sense that while women were there in society, their roles were performed on the stage by boy-actors, and further while cosmetics were allowed on the stage to indicate female characters, in real life, however, use of cosmetics was roundly condemned. Callaghan also suggests that cosmetics were then seen as a projection of women's cultural self-representation, and thus as a threat to male hegemony: "Little wonder, then, that an impetus to restrict women's cultural self-representation informs the period's misogynist invective against *women's* use of cosmetics"[30]. Citing Hamlet's reference to 'The harlot's cheek, beautied with plast'ring art' (III.i.51), she says that cosmetics were frequently associated with prostitution, thus leading to a paradox:

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[27] Dympna Callaghan, "'Othello was a white man': properties of race on Shakespeare's stage," in Terence Hawkes, ed. *Alternative Shakespeares, Vol 2*, (Routledge, London and New York, 1996), p. 193.
[28] Callaghan, p. 196.
[29] Callaghan, p. 202.

[30] Callaghan, p. 200.

> It is striking that precisely the qualities admired in verse, the rhetorical devices which constitute femininity in poetry - ruby lips, rosy cheeks, white flesh - are condemned when women employ cosmetic artifice to enhance their own appearance. The male controlled discursive display of women in the blazon tradition is culturally valourized, while women's hold on even the lowest reaches of the representational apparatus, cosmetics, is condemned. [31]

In *Othello*, Callaghan argues that Shakespeare makes the opposite colours marry each other to show a pattern of 'black over white', implying that black always invokes its antithesis, whiteness. Thus, miscegenation is projected in terms of Othello's being capable of attracting Desdemona and the Venetians,[32] a process that involves an act of double impersonation - because a "white actor is playing the Moor who is trying to assimilate in Venice."[33] In the Senate scene (1.3), he is duplicating the "tropes of civilisation - deference and decorum,"[34] and "attempts to play white and straight."[35] Thus, what could have been a flagrant violation of the racial norms if a real black actor had performed, it was innocuous as merely a white actor represented a black character on the stage. Shakespeare utilised this provision of the stage to portray the nuances of racial difference in terms of a story of the beauty and the beast.

Theatre is able to negotiate the entire representational register from exhibition to mimesis, and the racial register from deficiency (Moors as subhuman) to excess (libidinous, 'extravagant and wheeling stranger[s]'). Theatre thus allows for more nuanced depictions - that is, more finely calibrated productions of difference - even while working with thoroughly emblematic depictions of Moors and a polarized conception of woman.[36]

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[31] Callaghan, pp.201-2.
[32] Callaghan, p. 205.
[33] Callaghan, p.205.
[34] Callaghan, p. 205.
[35] Callaghan, p. 205.
[36] Callaghan, p. 206.

Thus, the colour of the skin, in Shakespeare's time was more symbolic than actual, hence the reasons for Othello's behaviour have to be sought in the representational context in which he is situated. How the cultural difference is indicated through him, how he is manipulated to a recognition of this, and in what way he is distorting the Venetian ethos may be the factors we have to judge.

It is Iago who orchestrates a racist chorus on Othello. He takes Roderigo along to bring Brabantio the news of Desdemona's secret marriage, and after his obscene image of the black ram and white ewe "tupping" (1.1.89) each other is made, it is Roderigo who in his turn provides a racial perspective in saying that Desdemona has surrendered her "duty, wit, and fortunes" to a "wheeling stranger" (1.1.137-8). Brabantio, in his turn too, associates Othello, as noted earlier, with a culture where magic and sorcery thrive as living customs.

> Damn'd as thou art, thou hast enchanted her,
> ...thou has practis'd on her with foul charms,
> Abus'd her delicate youth, with drugs or minerals,
> That weakens motion. (1.2. 64, 74-6)

It is beyond Brabantio's comprehension as to why Desdemona, who has rejected so many competent suitors before, should be drawn to a man, who is not only far more aged than she, but also a man from a different race. Therefore, he, as Andr'e Green suggests, "needs other reasons: the Moor has some power, the Moor uses sorcery."[37]

We can also refer to Greenblatt's idea, already mentioned, that Othello improvises a tale for Desdemona. Bradley considers him as "the most romantic figure among Shakespeare's heroes."[38] And Callaghan almost confirms this when she explains wherein is contained the magic of Othello:

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[37] Green, p. 327.
[38] Bradley, 152.

> What Othello self-deprecatingly describes as his '*Rude* ...speech' and *'round unvarnish'd'* story turns out to be not so much the plain tale he promises, but a compelling and flagrant rendition of the exotic, replete with proper names, marvels and geographical specificity. That his tale would win the Duke's daughter too is indicative not of assimilation but of the sexual potency of racial alterity. Othello's appearance at the Senate articulates difference at the level of the visual, and then his narrative obsessively refers us, even in its most compellingly aural aspects (the famous 'Othello music' caricatured by Iago as grotesque 'bombast', and 'horribly stuff'd'), to the *spectacle of tactility* Jonson urged in *Poetaster;* to the 'rude' (i.e. stark), 'round' surfaces of a difference we might touch.[39]

This is so far as the magic Othello holds onto the Venetian people. Racial miscegenation, however, is founded on reciprocity, and in this respect Othello becomes both a nemesis and victim of an alien culture. Because that alien culture, Venice, is a patriarchal society, and since Othello is a convert and himself belongs to a highly patriarchal society, he finds the Venetian concepts of power, control, and possession congenial to his own make-up, and thus is easily swayed to believe that Desdemona can deceive him. On this note, French also argues that the Venetian society is 'profoundly misogynistic', and "Women are seen largely as functions, and trivialized; there is general belief in male right to own women and control them."[40]

French's argument that in Venice the feminine principles ( 'loyalty, obedience, and above all, emotion'[41]) are sacrificed, can be related to what Freud explains as the dialectical relationship between the reality principle and the pleasure principle. Freud's view is that man represses his libido to gain social aims, and in the process he travels

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[39] Callaghan, p. 205.

[40] Marilyn French, "The Late Tragedies," in Drakakis, ed. *Shakespearean Tragedy* (Longman Critical Readers, Longman, 1992), p. 235.

[41] *Ibid*, p. 232.

from pleasure to restraining of pleasure.[42] When Othello tries to reassure the Doges that it is "not / To please the palate of my appetite" (1.3.261-2) that he wants Desdemona to accompany him to Cyprus, he is giving the political goal (his undertaking of the war will enhance his image to the Venetian authority) preference over the private aspiration (Desdemona's love), an attempt that corresponds to Freud's description of the transformation of the pleasure principle into the reality principle. Freud, however, contends that the pleasure principle cannot be completely annihilated, it can be merely contained. The history of civilisation shows this constant struggle taking place within the individual psyche as well as in the social parameters.

> The fact that the reality principle has to be re-established continually in the development of man indicates that its triumph over the pleasure principle is never complete and never secure. In the Freudian conception, civilisation does not once and for all terminate a 'state of nature'. What civilisation masters and represses - the claim of the pleasure principle - continues to exist in civilisation itself. The unconscious retains the objectives of the defeated pleasure principle. Turned back by the external reality or even unable to reach it, the full force of the pleasure principle not only survives in the unconscious but also affects in manifold ways the very reality which has superseded the pleasure principle. *The return of repressed* makes up the tabooed and subterranean history of civilisation. And the exploration of this history reveals not only the secret of the individual but also that of civilisation.[43]

The reality principle is an organised system imposed from above, as Marcuse explains, by the father-king figure, and the pleasure principle which has its source in the mother-figure continues to rebel against this restriction in manifold forms - in war and in

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[42] I have applied Freud from my reading of Herbert Marcuse's seminal book, *Eros and Civilisation: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud* (ARK Paperbacks, London, 1987), p. 12.
[43] Marcuse, pp. 15-6.

sexuality. Marcuse also suggests that Freud expresses that the conflict between the two principles can be related to the ancient overthrowing of matriarchy by patriarchy. Thus, woman, as mother or otherwise, remains a potential rebel, and thus to be restrained, as Othello wishes he restrained Desdemona. Marcuse writes:

> As the reality principle takes root, even its most primitive and most brutally enforced form, the pleasure principle becomes something frightful and terrifying; the impulses for free gratification meet with anxiety, and this anxiety calls for protection against them. The individuals have to defend themselves against the spectre of their liberation from want and pain, against integral gratification. And the latter is represented by the woman who, as mother, has once, for the first and last time, provided such gratification. These are the instinctual factors which reproduce the rhythm of liberation and domination.[44]

We have already referred to the Senate Scene (1.3.), which is so very much symptomatic in understanding Othello's character. He declares, in all sincerity, that his wedlock with Desdemona should not be conceived of as having arisen from a craving for sex, neither should it be viewed as a factor to distract his attention from the upcoming war if Desdemona accompanies him:

Oth (to the Duke): Let her have your voice.
Vouch with me heaven, I therefore beg it not
To please the palate of my appetite,
Nor to comply with heat - the young affects
In me defunct - and proper satisfaction,
But to be free and bounteous to her mind;
And heaven defend your good souls that you think

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[44] Marcuse, p. 67.

I will your serious and great business scant
When she is with me. (1.3.260-8)

The speech apparently is an innocent honest confession of intention, but put in the premise of our argument, it can also be viewed as the starting point to derive a suggestion that Othello does lack a genuine appreciation of woman in her totality. Perhaps because of this it becomes easier for Iago to influence his mind veer toward an extremely misogynistic direction. French also detects this misogynistic impulse:

> Othello, without his awareness, shares this contempt [of women]. The first clue to this is his behaviour in the Senate chamber. Othello swears that 'as truly as to heaven / I do confess the vices of my blood, / So justly to your grave ears I'll present / How I did thrive in this fair lady's love' (1.3.122-5) .... Unconsciously, he is associating love with vice. In his effort to persuade the Senate that his commission will take priority over his marriage, he says 'With all my heart'. He accepts the commission for Cyprus with 'a natural and prompt alacrity'. He seems to have no regret whatever about leaving Desdemona. When she demurs and asks to go with him, he seconds her 'not / To please the palate of my appetite ... but to be free and bounteous to her mind' (1.3.261,2,5).[45]

Greenblatt also picks up this same scene and comments that Othello's "not / To please the palate of my appetite" utterance shows his keen sense of shame in possibly having succumbed to some kind of physical urge or erotic feeling which even youths are forbidden to desire. This psychological prohibition may have crept into Othello through accepting an extremely outmoded interpretation of the Seventh Commandment: thou shalt not commit adultery. Finding Othello a novice both in Christianity and in sexuality, Iago intentionally improvises that in Venice they have a very questionable attitude towards sexuality: "In Venice they do let God see the pranks / They dare not show their

[45] French, p. 235.

husbands" (3.3.206-7). Adultery, as Iago will have Othello understand it, was viewed in the rigorist version to be the "most horrible of mortal sins, more detestable ... than homicide or plunder ... and punishable by death."[46] Greenblatt quotes from Tyndale's friend George Joye, and from the Cambridge Puritan William Perkins to support the view that while adultery was castigated, chastity was considered as 'a gift of the Holy Ghost', and says: "It is in the bitter spirit of these conditions that Othello enacts the grotesque comedy of treating his wife as a strumpet and the tragedy of executing her in the name of justice, lest she betray more men."[47]

But this is only the first part of Greenblatt's argument. The second part which is an extension of the first is that even when sex is practised to an excess between husband and wife that may also be called adultery. He quotes Saint Jerome as having said that "An adulterer is he who is too ardent a lover of his wife."[48] Seneca is also quoted: "All love of another's wife is shameful; so too, too much love of your own. A wise man ought to love his wife with judgment, not affection. Let him control his impulses and not to be borne headlong into copulation. Nothing is fouler than to love a wife like an adultress ...Let them show themselves to their wives not as lovers, but as husbands."[49] Even though the Protestants attacked the Catholic doctrine of celibacy and approved of "the legitimate role of sexual pleasure,"[50] but still they took up a cautious approach toward conjugal sexuality, as Calvin writes: the "man who shows no modesty or comeliness in conjugal intercourse is committing adultery with his wife,"[51] and in *King's Book*, which is credited to Henry VIII, it is recorded that a man may break the Seventh Commandment "and live unchaste with his own wife, if he do unmeasurably or inordinately serve his or her fleshly appetite or lust."[52]

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[46] Stephen Greenblatt, "The Improvisation of Power," in John Drakakis, ed. *Shakespearean Tragedy* (Longman Critical Readers, Longman, 1992), p. 176.
[47] Greenblatt, p. 177.
[48] Greenblatt, p. 177.
[49] Greenblatt, p. 177.
[50] Greenblatt, p. 178.
[51] Greenblatt, p. 178.
[52] Greenblatt, p. 178.

Thus Greenblatt traces the history of "institutional hostility"[53] towards sexuality from the earliest Christian era to the Puritans and explains that one of the underlying causes was the "belief that pleasure constitutes a legitimate release from dogma and constraint."[54]

So, when in the face of Othello's utterance "Not / To please my appetite" Desdemona declares her passion frankly "That I did love the Moor, to live with him, ... my heart's subdued / Even to the utmost pleasure of my lord" (1.3.248-51), it strikes Othello as an unpardonable endorsement of the sexual urge.

Greenblatt writes:

> This moment of erotic intensity, this frank acceptance of pleasure and submission to her spouse's pleasure, is, I would argue, as much as Iago's slander the cause of Desdemona's death, for it awakens the deep current of sexual anxiety that with Iago's help expresses itself in quite orthodox fashion as the perception of adultery.[55]

Given his manipulative rhetoric, Iago finds it easy to use lechery as an issue to rouse Othello's suspicion, and thereby to destroy him. Greenblatt also acknowledges Iago's power of manipulation, though, more importantly, he detects this power to lie in his perception (that is, his improvisational power) that Othello might be ruined through fanning out the issue of adultery.

> Such is the achievement of Iago's improvisation on the religious sexual doctrine in which Othello believes; true to that doctrine, pleasure itself becomes for Othello pollution, a defilement of his property in Desdemona and in himself. It is at the level of this dark, sexual revulsion that Iago has access to Othello.[56]

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[53] Greenblatt, p. 178.
[54] Greenblatt, p. 178.
[55] Greenblatt, p. 179.
[56] Greenblatt, p. 180.

In "It is the cause" (5.2.1-22) soliloquy is confirmed what have so far been advanced as reasons for Othello's killing of Desdemona.

It is the cause, it is the cause, my soul.
Let me not name it to you, you chaste stars.
It is the cause. Yet I'll not shed her blood,
Nor scar that whiter skin of hers than snow,
And smooth as monumental alabaster.
Yet she must die, else she'll betray more men.
Put out the light, and then put out the light.
If I quench thee, thou flaming minister,
I can again thy former light restore
Should I repent me; but once put out thy light,
Thou cunning'st pattern of excelling nature,
I know not where is that Promothean heat
That can thy light relume. When I have plucked thy rose
I cannot give it vital growth again.
It needs must wither. I'll smell thee on the tree. [He kisses her]
O balmy breath, that dost almost persuade
Justice to break her sword! One more, one more.
Be thus when thou art dead, and I will kill thee
And love thee after. One more, and that is the last. [He kisses her]
So sweet was ne'er so fatal. I must weep,
But they are cruel tears. This sorrow's heavenly,
It strikes where it doth love. She wakes. (5.2.1-22)

The cause, as Othello thinks, is adultery. He repeats "It is the cause" three times in just three lines. The repetition, as John Money suggests, emphasises that Othello wants this cause to be taken on a legal ground.[57] He thinks he is morally justified in taking the

[57] John Money, "Othello's 'It is the cause . . .' An Analysis," *Shakespeare Survey 6* (1953), p. 96.

action, i.e., killing Desdemona. When he addresses "my soul", it is to be understood that he also wants to convince himself that the cause of the action is legally just. When in a previous scene (3.4) Desdemona confessed to Emilia that she did not think she had given Othello any 'cause' (155), Emilia replied that jealous people needed no cause, their jealousy is their cause: "It is a monster / Begot upon itself, born on itself" (3.4.158-9). Othello's cause is extremely delimited, unverified, personalised, and, his association with Iago borne in mind, is villainous. The reference to the 'cause' is thus fatally ironical, because he is going to take up an action in the name of justice, which, given the orthodox Christianity that he has indoctrinated himself into, is probably proper, but, keeping in mind the Christian ethos of mercy, is insubstantial. Fatally enough, justice and revenge are to him equivalent terms of reference, having no room for mercy.[58] On account of this wrong premise, he will turn himself from a minister of justice into an ambassador of death. So, when he refers to the night stars - symbol of fixity as against Desdemona's slip which he, out of shame and shock, would not even name ("Let me not name it to you" (5.2.2)), and while beforehand he said he would not name it (i.e., adultery), because if he did it, modesty would be burnt up to cinders ("That would to cinders burn up modesty, / Did I but speak thy deeds" (4.2.77-8)), the irony, however, becomes devastatingly tragic, for the night stars are 'chaste', as chaste as we know Desdemona is. Desdemona's complexion is mentioned, which is whiter than snow, and smoother than alabaster. White, as has been noted earlier, is the colour of chastity, but, in Othello's eyes, the value-system is reversed, and white is the colour for loss of chastity. But the image of the alabaster as white and smooth does paradoxically lead us to think of the coldness of death, both allowing for the perception to develop that to him the dead spouse is holier than when she was alive, and that the audience are also receiving intimation that he is going to kill her. But, in doing that he decides neither to shed her blood, nor to scar her skin, no not in the way as Cleopatra decides upon the softest way to death (she asks the Clown, "Hast thou the pretty worm / Of Nilus there, that kills and pains not" (5.2.238-9)), but in the way as Iago, who has been so pervasively present in his consciousness, had suggested to him: "Do it not with poison. Strangle her in bed, even the bed she hath

[58] Money, p. 96.

contaminated" (4.1.202-3). So, he will strangulate her. She must die, for she might betray more men. The way of her death, however, must be a chosen process, the least violent one. As the two-fold vision of woman still haunts him, he can, though most hypocritically to us, make a hairbreadth distinction between what constitutes a merciful act and what a cruel one. As has been said before, he as yet thinks that by killing Desdemona he is killing the adulteress in her, and therefore he is performing a holy act. But the aspect of Desdemona which cannot be tainted, presumably her soul, still deserves mercy, and therefore, as Othello thinks, not to be destroyed. It is beyond Othello's capacity either to see the profanity in such an idea or to gauge the degree of hypocrisy involved in his psychology. In the smothering stage of the scene, hearing Emilia calling outside the door, he mistakenly thinks Desdemona to be still alive. He then immediately smothers her more with the pillow, he thinks, out of kindness: "I that am cruel am yet merciful" (5.2.96). He is here, as Money suggests, in a dilemma. He feels himself to be responsible to correct the sin, but at the same time he wants to exonerate himself from the responsibility. The dissimilarity here with Hamlet is striking. Hamlet procrastinates about the issue of revenge because the Ghost apparently is an unreliable agent to pursue him to killing, whereas Othello thinks he has a cause to kill, which we know is no cause. But there is a point of similarity too. Both of them are anxious to commit murder without sinning. In his attempt to find out if Desdemona was a strumpet ("Are not you a strumpet" (4.2.84)), she replies, "No, as I am a Christian" (4.2.86), which answer even fails to satisfy him. Othello is so overwhelmingly influenced by Iago that he becomes predisposed to kill Desdemona, and therefore no amount of assurances will convince him about her honesty. Her subsequent submission that she "preserve[d] this vessel for my lord / From any other foul unlawful touch" (4.2.86-7), is now pitifully taken in a diametrically opposite context, for Othello has formed the cause from her very attestation of faithfulness. Like Hamlet, Othello now generalises. His view of women now is, as it is to Hamlet, that they are all feeders - and, Desdemona in particular is a "public commoner" (4.2.75). Earlier while in delusion he wished that Desdemona might have been a feast for "the general camp" to taste "her sweet body" (3.3.351-2). His view

of Desdemona as an adulteress thus finally reaches the stage where his action will be decisive. The audience are now waiting tensely for the ultimate.

The "Put out the light, and then put out the light" line is significant in terms of stage props and conventions, as well as in a metaphorical sense. The scene is taking place at night, but factually it is at day light - in the afternoon - that the play is holding. That this is a night scene has already been indicated through Desdemona's asking Emilia to lay the wedding sheets on her bed for the night: "Prithee tonight / Lay on my bed my wedding sheets, remember" (4.2.107-8). And, Othello enters the stage with a light - may be a taper - thus helping the audience to visualise nightfall. The play of light and darkness is also being emphasised. Othello carries the light whose function, in stage terms, is to illumine the set. Then, instantly in his two references to the 'light', the stage sense is mixed up with the metaphorical sense. The first reference is to the taper he is carrying which he thinks can be 'relume'[59] (lighted again), if quenched. With the second reference to the 'light' the metaphorical implication, however, goes beyond the physicality of the prop, cutting deep through our realisation. He says, once Desdemona's light of life is taken away, there is no way he can bring her back to life. The whole spectacle is terribly ironical. We know that Othello cannot be the light bearer, as he, as Alan C. Dessen suggests, "brings with him ... an inner darkness linked to his twisted sense of 'cause' and justice."[60] So, when he uses the phrase "Promethean heat" (5.2.13), it does not only sound as absurd, but also as blasphemous, punctuating the demonic darkness that has engulfed his soul. Othello's very reference to the figure who stole light for mankind, posits itself in the negative way: his presumptuousness. It is actually that the light within him is put out.

> In his terms, Othello is gaining 'justice' by putting out Desdemona's 'light.' For the spectator, who can readily see beyond the Moor's limited sense of 'It is the cause,' the tragic chooser is not only extinguishing a

[59]Money, p. 99. 'Relume,' according to Money, is a Shakespearean coinage, not used by him elsewhere.

[60] Alan C. Dessen, *Elizabethan Stage: Conventions and Modern Interpreters* (Cambridge Univ. Press,1984), p. 81.

> light or life in his innocent wife but, equally if not more importantly, putting out a light within himself...linking himself irrevocably to Iago and Iago's darkness ('I am your own for ever' - 3.3.480).[61]

So far Othello has been so possessed with his conviction that Desdemona has betrayed him, he has not realised that his whole attitude is ingrained in hypocrisy. He sees, what Money has designated as the first movement[62], Desdemona alive when he wishes her dead in the name of justice, as much as Brutus in *Julius Caesar* decides to conspire to bring about the death of Caesar in the name of democracy. Neither Othello nor Brutus does hesitate to kill human beings in the name of ideals.

In the second movement, according to Money, "Othello sees Desdemona as already dead and finds that he cannot bring her back to life."[63]

> When I have plucked thy rose
> I cannot give it vital growth again.
> It needs must wither. I'll smell thee on the tree. (5.2.13-5)

The scene now takes on a two-fold significance. It vindicates, as Colie says, the symbolic realisation of the carpe diem theme, in which the rose of love is to be plucked and enjoyed before it is subsumed in the flower of death. In this case the rose plucked is the symbol for Desdemona, while, as Greenblatt suggests, the marriage bed turns into the death bed. Colie develops the idea that the implication of the carpe diem image is Shakespeare's adding a dimension to the sonneteers' conventional use of the rose as a symbol of love:

> . . . . in Othello's speech, the familiar metaphor alters into something far more charged than it usually is. Abruptly, all the implications of the image, folded into the rose-petals, unfold again - once plucked, *all* roses

[61] Dessen, p. 82.
[62] Money, p. 101.

> wither. Indeed, all roses wither anyway, even left unplucked on the tree. Once destroyed, nor roses, nor light, nor love, nor life can be 'relum'd'.[64]

Greenblatt, in his stride, not only absorbs Colie's view but further suggests that by denying the pleasure principle Othello becomes incapable of loving Desdemona. He can only love her when she becomes literally a 'monumental alabaster' - untainted with adultery.

> When, approaching the marriage bed on which Desdemona has spread the wedding sheets, Othello rages, "The bed, lust stain'd, shall with lust's blood be spotted (5.1.36), he comes close to revealing his tormenting identification of marital sexuality - limited perhaps to the night he took Desdemona's virginity - and adultery. The orthodox element of this identification is directly observed: "...this sorrow's heavenly; / It strikes when it does love" (5.2.21-2) . . . .
>
> The play reveals at this point not the unfathomable darkness of human motives but their terrible transparency, and the horror of the revelation is its utter inability to deflect violence. Othello's identity is entirely caught up in the narrative structure that drives him to turn Desdemona into a being incapable of pleasure, a piece of 'monumental alabaster', so that he will at last be able to love her without the taint of adultery:
>
> "Be thus, when thou art dead, and I will kill
> And love thee after" (5.2.18-9).[65]

In the rest of the play Othello acts as an avenging minister until he discovers the truth about Iago. As Desdemona wakes up from sleep, he asks her to "Think on thy sins"

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[63] Money, p. 101.
[64] Colie, p. 159.

[65] Greenblatt, pp. 180-1.

(5.2.42), to which she replies, "They are loves I bear to you" (5.2.43). Othello then mentions the handkerchief which he saw with Cassio. Desdemona in plain surprise declares, "I . . . never loved Cassio" (5.2.63-4). Othello's reply to this is revealing of his psychology: "Thou dost stone my heart, / And makes me call what I intend to do / A *murder* which I thought a *sacrifice*" (5.2.68-70) (Italics mine).

Killing Desdemona for him is an act of sacrifice. He thinks Desdemona, being his wife, has made him a sinner too by her sin. So, the only way to expiate both her and himself is to make a sacrifice to the gods. Thus he is careful to cleanly isolate killing as murder out of personal vengeance from killing as justice from a sense of duty to the gods. In such a situation we see Hamlet wavering between 'to be' and 'not to be', whereas Othello is hell-bent to do an unholy act for a holy reason. He refuses to let Desdemona live even for one extra prayer, let alone one whole night, or half an hour. "It is too late" (5.2.92), he solemnly declares before he smothers her. A little later when everything will come to light, Othello will tell, by way of explanation, that he did the murder not "in hate, but all in honour" (5.2.301).

It is only after Emilia's protestation that Desdemona was all innocent and that she herself found the handkerchief and gave it to Iago (5.2.237-8) that things begin to clear up for him - while all the time Desdemona is lying dead on her marriage-bed. In deep anguish he realises that the scales have now reversed. Instead of his releasing Desdemona from her sin in order to send her to heaven, it is now she on whose consent will depend, on the day of judgment, whether he will get a berth in heaven or not: "When we shall meet at count [the 'day of judgment',[66]] / This look of thine will hurl my soul from heaven, / And fiends will snatch at it" (5.2.280-2). The next utterance is even more telling: "Cold, cold, my girl, / Even like thy chastity" (5.2.282-3). Finally, therefore, Othello embarks upon the complex resolution that the lifeless Desdemona is now as true as she was chaste. The complexity lies in that Othello had all along been obsessed with the idea whether his wife was chaste or not, and she could only prove the truth by dying. And the haunting image of the 'monumental alabaster' is difficult to drive away from our consciousness.

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[66] Ridley, p. 192.

Can Othello die misunderstood? Can he die without some saving grace? What would we make of his defensive speech, "Soft you, a word or two before you go" (5.2.347-365)? Unlike Hamlet who at the dying moments can request his friend Horatio to tell his story, Othello has to frame his own submission. It is remarkable that in this speech he does not want to exonerate himself of the crime, but he simply wants to be remembered as "one that loved not wisely but too well" (5.2.353), and, it can be assumed how grieving it is for him to flash back over all the opportunities he had when he could remove all the confusion by putting one straight question either to Cassio or to Desdemona! What obstructed him? The cultural difference? Perhaps. Otherwise why would he wind up his speech by citing an incident which gives testimony to his utter dedication in his services to Venice?

> Set you down this,
> And say besides that in Aleppo once,
> Where a malignant and a turbaned Turk
> Beat a Venetian and traduced the state,
> I took by th'throat the circumcis'ed dog
> And smote him thus. [And, he stabs himself] (5.2.360-5)

The Venetians of course believe him, because none of them accuses him as a Moor in the last scene. However, Othello's reference to the killing of the 'turbaned Turk' puts the cultural difference afresh, and confirms that complete conversion or absolute acclimatisation is not possible. By killing a Venetian (Desdemona), he cites, as if for a counterweight, the example of killing a Turk to show the patriotism of a convert - but to achieve what? Only vainly has he tried to establish a comparison between a killing as a soldier and his murder of his own wife. The inept comparison only projects in clear terms the abyss he has reached. In *Othello* Shakespeare treads upon a very difficult ground in the sense that he has taken up a racial subject but tries to treat it as a less-than-racial matter, and in the process Desdemona is meant to be taken as love's martyr; neverthelesss there is scope to study her in the light of cultural difference. Similarly

Othello is meant to be taken as a good lover (in a universal sense) but unwise, not necessarily to be judged from a racial perspective, whereas the gender questions and the facts of conversion are equally important in judging his character. In spite of the play's intention to keep itself confined to a non-racial perspective, the signals it gives go beyond it, thereby making the play potentially capable of being judged from various critical perspectives.

## King Lear

In *King Lear*, soliloquies in the strictest sense of the word are not used, because what Lear utters as soliloquies are delivered in the presence of one or more characters. But the reason why they should be considered as soliloquies, as Wolfgang Clemen so effectively explains, is that Lear often delivers these speeches - for example, his ravings in the storm-scenes - being completely oblivious of the presence of others. Thus, the revelation of his inner thoughts, the usual expectation from soliloquies, comes without his being influenced by the presence of others. Clemen defines Lear's speeches as 'soliloquising speeches':

> When we call King Lear to mind, it may at first seem that in this play the tragic hero is particularly given to the soliloquy, but when we look more closely we see that it is less a matter of soliloquies than of soliloquising speeches, which like the asides, are very close to the soliloquy. Lear's great colloquy with the raging elements (3.2), and also his visions of the world's injustice (4.6) - to mention only two of the speeches that occur to us when we are prompted to think of his soliloquies - are strictly speaking not soliloquies because Lear is not alone on the stage, but surrounded by people who are listening. Nevertheless, such speeches, which from the Third Act onwards become the prevalent and characteristic form of utterance spoken by the ousted king, are soliloquies in a more profound sense than are the blatant self-expositions of Edgar and Edmund. Lear's soliloquising speeches are the natural form of expression of a man driven into the isolation of insanity.[1]

[1] Wolfgang Clemen, *Shakespeare's Soliloquies* (trans. Charity Scott Stokes), (Methuen & Co. Ltd., London & New York, 1987), pp. 171-2.

In fact, soliloquies in the normal sense (or, as 'blatant self-expositions') are uttered by Edmund,[2] Edgar, and Kent in the following sequence: Edmund:1.2.1-22; 1.2.115-30; 1.2.166-73; 2.1.14-18; and 5.1.46-60; Edgar: 2.2.164-84; 4.1.1-12; Kent: 1.4.1-7; 2.2.151-64. That is Edmond speaks five soliloquies, and Edgar and Kent two each. Except for Edmund's first three soliloquies, the rest are highly expository in nature, and thus fall short of the sublimity of Shakespeare's great soliloquies. On the other hand, all Lear's major speeches that have the semblance of soliloquy occur mainly in the storm scenes from 2.2 to 3.6. To be precise, the first speech which has this character of a soliloquy is "O, reason not thy need" (2.2.438-59) speech, which coincides with the approaching of the storm. As the storm continues raging, Lear utters more soliloquising speeches of profound significance until 3.6, and in addition to these speeches, his utterances at the later stages of the play when he sees visions can also be considered as soliloquies. In short, *King Lear* is different from other three great tragedies in respect of both the scope and function allotted to its soliloquies.

We exclude Edgar and Kent's soliloquies from our discussion as those are very minimally relevant to our study, while we begin the essay by considering Edmund's first two soliloquies.

Edmund's first soliloquy, which is an apostrophe to nature, is a revelation of his villainous intent, which he justifies as necessary for a bastard son like him.

> Thou, nature, art my goddess. To they law
> My services are bound. Wherefore should I
> Stand in the plague of custom and permit
> The curiosity of nations to deprive me
> For that I am some twelve or fourteen moonshines
> Lag of a brother? Why 'bastard'? Wherefore 'base',
> When my dimensions are as well compact,

[2] The text we are following has spelled *Edmund* as *Edmond*, which it claims is the Folio spelling. We keep it that way in the quotations from the text, but otherwise retain the conventional spelling, that is, *Edmund*, in the discussion.

My mind as generous, and my shape as true
As honest madam's issue? Why brand they us
With 'base', with 'baseness, bastardy - base, base' -
Who in the lust stealth of nature take
More composition and fierce quality
Than doth within a dull, stale, tire'd bed
Go to th' creating a whole tribe of fops
Got 'tween a sleep and wake? Well then,
Legitimate Edgar, I must have your land.
Our father's love is to the bastard Edmond
As to th' legitimate. Fine word, 'legitimate'.
Well, my legitimate, if this letter speed
And my invention thrive, Edmond the base
Shall to th' legitimate. I grow, I prosper.
Now gods, stand up for bastards! (1.2.1-22)

Which nature is Edmund praying to? Not the one that Lear will encounter in the storm scene, but the one which he thinks will be only at his service. In this regard, he has his predecessor in Richard III, and we have shown the similarity between them in their villainous utterances in the Introduction. Edmund, however, exposes the fundamental issues that the play is going to deal with: filial bond, parental obligations, the contention between virtue-by-sweat and virtue-by-birth, selfishness and selflessness, and so on. But he ponders all these questions in order to pursue his own selfish end - to dispossess Edgar through villainy. Thus the soliloquy is merely expository in the sense of Edmund,s getting assigned to himself the role of the villain.

On the other hand, his second soliloquy, rendered in prose ("This is the excellent foppery of the world (1.2.115-30)), grapples with the question of man's relation to nature. The speech comes just after Gloucester has expressed his own sense of confusion about the times, failing to realise that he has been put into a trap by Edmund. Edmund, on the contrary, firmly believes that nature has nothing to do with man's fate, and hence

the star cannot be blamed for man's action: "An admirable evasion of whoremaster man, to lay his goatish disposition on the charge of a star" (1.2.23-5)! Edmund is bearing a scientific attitude, he is a new man who does not believe in superstition. He is the representative of a new generation which upholds the utilitarian values rather than the feudal ones. Self-promotion through ruthless selfish drive is his motto. But the other side of the coin is that extremely personified objectivity is a reductive definition of man, as it turns one into a selfish hypocrite. As Edmund is only committed to achieving for himself, he cannot achieve much, and he ends up by destroying himself. Through Lear's stages of learning fellow-feeling what is being implicitly put to the test is Edmund's view that the selfish 'nature' can be one's goddess. However, Lear's all-embracing humanity, attained through his shedding his egotistic self, engulfs everybody, and even Edmund is not left without the Midas touch.either. So, when he announces in the last moments of his life that he too wants "Some good ... to do" (5.3.218-22) despite his own nature, it is not only a confirmation of his conversion but also a measure of Lear's greatness.

One good reason why Shakespeare has not allowed Lear any length of soliloquy, when the scale in which he is drawn more than demands it, is that the action of the play is concerned with turning Lear from an egotistical personality into a communitarian one, and hence when his famous apostrophe to nature, "Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks" (3.2.1-24) is delivered it sounds like nothing but a soliloquy, because though the lone figure of the Fool is present there as if to bear witness to the psychological changes Lear is undergoing, he is not conscious of his presence.

Besides, if Lear is compared with Hamlet or with Macbeth from a psychological premise, it may be seen that both the latter characters show greater reaches of depth of the mind than Lear ever does. For example, Hamlet has to struggle with a doubt whether the Ghost is true or false, or whatever it is saying is true or not. There is no way he can get an answer to this riddle from the people around him. Nobody can definitely enlighten him about what he should exactly do with regard to the supposed murder of his father. The Ghost can, but it is a supernatural being, and so the degree of improbability in having to believe in a ghost as his own father's, and further to act under his command whom he cannot either believe or disbelieve, brings up a series of questions which are

metaphysical in nature and thus difficult to resolve. He has to grope for his way depending almost solely upon his own understanding not only of the world but also of the supernatural, knowing all the while that one wrongly perceived action will turn him from an avenger into a killer. As Hamlet suffers partly from a natural apathy to homicide and partly from frustrations with the moral duality of his job, he exposes his struggling conscience through his soliloquies. In a different way Macbeth is also using his soliloquies to reveal his anguished soul. Macbeth, unlike Hamlet, is not obviously suffering from a moral dilemma of the to-be-or-not-to-be type, but his problems arise from sources which he thought were easy to be quashed. Though he goes for the killing straightforward defying his roused conscience, it is his conscience that remains alert and makes him doubt the witches who are the supernatural agents, and the once resolute Macbeth becomes irresolute, and for all his efforts for the golden crown he finds nothing but dust to lick. And, still he doggedly continues through the end. His soliloquies convey his despair in the face of the reassertion of his conscience. Othello is in no way dissimilar. His "It is the cause, it is the cause, my soul" speech springs from a deep metaphysical question as to whether it is right for him to take a moral stand which he thinks justifies the killing of a human being for adultery. That is, is he right in thinking it just to take up the role of the punisher of human sins on behalf of God?s His dilemma is like Hamlet's - a matter of taking responsibility, though Othello's sensitivity is aeons away from that of Hamlet in this regard.

Lear as such does not grapple with any such metaphysical confusion. His problem is that he ignored to see certain social dynamics which he is made to take cognisance of slowly but steadily through great suffering. There is no either/or situation presenting him with a dilemma, though it may appear judging him by his act in the First Scene that he is dispersing his parsimony out of a pressing need to see which daughter loves him the most. This game of choice maybe at best a paternal whim, and it is not that he is dispensing with one truth in favour of another equally potential truth. It is rather that he is making a bad choice as against a good choice. For example, he is choosing Goneril and Regan against Cordelia, and we know (or rather perceive from the very beginning) that the former are bad people while the latter is a gem of a woman. So, this bad choice has to

be corrected, and therein lies no confusion about it. On the other hand, while Hamlet progresses toward achieving his goal we still may have an inkling in our hearts that probably Hamlet, as he still may have been misguided by the Ghost, is going to commit not an act of revenge but an act of homicide. But, in Lear's case the more he realises his early mistake the more we are assured that he is following the right direction. In a way his action is much more predictable than those of the other three. In this sense *King Lear* follows the morality tradition more strongly than either *Hamlet* or *Macbeth* does. As the action of the play advances, Lear resolves, getting himself corrected in the process, certain issues about which we have no confusion. In a great way *King Lear* deals with social truths, and not metaphysical truths, and this explains why Lear is not given the pure soliloquies to utter. In other words, soliloquies are a better agency for handling metaphysical problems than societal problems.

And, Lear's learning begins no sooner than he is ready for it. Lear is refused shelter by his first two daughters, or more than that he has refused to comply with their demands to reduce his retinue from 100 to 50 to 25 and lastly to 1, that is only himself. "Hear me, my lord," says Goneril, " What need you five-and-twenty, ten, or five, / To follow in a house where twice so many / Have a command to tend you" (2.2.434-37)? And Regan adds, "What need one" (2.2.438)? The word 'need' starts the whole volley of ranting contained in the speech: "O, reason not the need" (2.2.438)! From the first scene where a powerful Lear is seen hurriedly dispensing with all practical *needs*, the theme up to now has by contrast developed on a line to enable Lear to confront a redefinition of the question on 'need'. In that scene he asks each of his daughters how much she loves him. Love is an abstract quality, but Lear in his presumptuousness thinks it fit to have it expressed in quantifiable terms! An absurd proposition, which is again taken up by Shakespeare in a later play, though in a different vein. In *Antony and Cleopatra*, Cleopatra asks Antony: "If it be love indeed, tell me how much." Antony replies, "There's beggary in the love that can be reckoned." Cleopatra still insists: "I'll set a bourn how far to be beloved." Antony says, "Then must thou needs find out new heaven, new earth" (1.1.14-7). The meaning of the word, 'beggary', in Antony's sense, indicates the impossibility of having love (in Lear's case, affection) expressed in a tangential sense, and Cordelia's "Nothing,

my lord" (1.1.87), is a precise articulation to the same effect. In this sequence, the word 'nothing' is used five times (and there are a couple of references to the word in later scenes) between Cordelia and Lear, defining the difference in their respective perspectives.

Cordelia's 'nothing' is signifying that nothing is there in the material world to value the human emotion in exact terms. She uses the word, if a linguistic label is allowed, as a pronominal noun. As Lear uses it, however, the connotation changes, and it becomes a substitute for 'no thing', which is an adjectival expression for 'matter'. Lear's fondness for epithets of opulence ('*shadowy* forests', 'champaigns *riched*', '*plenteous* rivers' and '*wide-skirted* meads' (1.1.64-5)(Italics added)) marks his generosity, but at the same time it denotes an overriding concern in him with his material kingdom which is in his possession but which he will soon leave. The habit of clinging to things is probably hard to die, so that when he is making the supreme sacrifice in the sense of giving away his kingdom, he as if to counterbalance this grand act of sacrifice asks his daughters to *materialise* their love(s) - the plural sense seems to be apt for Lear's psychology - for him. The idea is: I have given you this much, let me see how much you give me in return. Lear spreads out a map of his kingdom proudly showings three parts equally divided, though "A third more opulent" (1.1.86) is meant for Cordelia. But to this well computed fealty she says 'Nothing'. Lear is surprised, and soon enraged, because Cordelia is (or was) his 'joy'(1.1.82). Being angry he decides to eject her, and even in this his sense of materiality is yet again manifest as he points Burgundy to a discarded Cordelia in the following way:

> But now her *price* is fallen. Sir, there she stands.
> If aught within that little seeming substance,
> Or all of it, with our displeasure pieced,
> And *nothing* more, may fitly like your grace,
> She's there, and she is yours. (1.1.196-99) (Italics mine)

So, Cordelia is valued at a price, and now being out of his favour, like an unmarketable thing she has gone out of currency, and her price is nothing! It would be a much easier type of characterisation if Shakespeare meant us to take King Lear as a man who is used to judging his relationship with people solely on the basis of transactions and trading off. We hear him specifically defining what he is giving away: "we will divest us both of rule / Interest of territory, cares of state" (1.1.49-51) and "The sway, / Revenue, execution of the rest" (1.1.136-7), and in return, he will only *need* the "The name and all the addition to a king" (1.1.136). But Shakespeare makes it more complex by having Lear not see the paradox that while he is giving away his kingdom, which may be considered as the absolute image of the highest kind of materiality, his demand of his daughters' love for him to be expressed in palpable terms sounds as absurd as his wish to retain the name and addition of a king without the power of a king.

Lear is under the impression that he is just bringing about a rearrangement within the power structure and the paradigm of responsibilities, but what he is actually doing is an act of submission, or of sacrifice - he is deposing himself as a king (though he remains in the modern sense a mere titular head), and as the order of transaction changes, that is, when power is handed over to Goneril and Regan, he suddenly finds himself on the receiving end. So, while it was he who so far adjudged what others needed, now the question is put back to him by Regan in a material sense: "What need one" (2.2.437)? His authority is directly challenged.

In the barter, Lear is definitely the loser, as the Fool says that Lear had no wit in his 'bald crown' when he gave away the 'golden one' (1.4.145-6). The golden crown was the symbol of authority without which, as the Fool says, he has become "an O without a figure" (1.4.174-5), whereas the Fool with his coxcomb on holds his profession and thus is better than Lear who is nothing ("thou art nothing," (1.4.175)).

Even when Lear's bartering attitude slackens, as he becomes disoriented by the growing sense that his two older daughters are showing ingratitude, his exchange of words with them at this encounter goes absurdly along the former line, and he articulates his wounded pride not in any emotive terms, but in mathematical terms. When his second daughter tells him that she will entertain only twenty-five followers, and not fifty

(2.2.418-22), Lear declares: "I gave you all" (2.2.423). The word 'all' at this point may mean not only the material belongings which he has just recently abandoned to his two daughters, but also the desperateness in his attempt to make them see that he also gave them his heart, which however is not tenable because Lear also implicitly suggests that when all is given he expects to have something in return. As Regan is found adamant in her decision not to allow him more than 25 companions, Lear quickly shifts his pleading to Goneril whom he has already delivered blistering curses; but the language is again concretely transactional:

> I'll go with thee.
> Thy *fifty* yet doth *double five-and-twenty*,
> And thou art *twice* her love. (2.2.432-34) (Italics mine)

This is true that this line of argument widens the scope to see Lear as a crass materialist who - partly because he is a king who is used to enjoying many privileges as that of having dared to call for a charter of human emotions, and partly because he is old and rash by nature - has conceived the idea of human relationships as only existing in terms of material exchange, an idea so essentially wrong that his relearning starts no sooner than he has disposed his kingdom between his two older daughters who with "glib and oily art" (1.2.224) vow their love for him. This view therefore explains the play from a morality premise in which Lear is seen first making a wrong choice and then going through an ethical education in the process of righting the wrong. This is virtually a delimiting reading because it fails to take into cognisance the contradictory claims of kingship and kinship on Lear. He is both king and father, and while, during the first scene, he is emphasising on the filial bond and not on the regal bond he is not careful to avoid the confusion of identifying the state obligations with familial bindings, or kingship with kinship. Once the power is given over to Goneril and Regan they want to rule, apparently, in accordance with state discipline and decorum, and hence Goneril's complaints to Lear can be heard:

> Not only, sir, this your all-licensed fool,
> But other of your insolent retinue
> Do hourly carp and quarrel, breaking forth
> In rank and not-to-be-endur'ed riots. (1.4.183-86)

And,

> You strike my people, and your disordered rabble
> Make servants of their betters. (1.4.234-35)

To this need for formality, which Goneril is falsely emphasising, Lear's response is remarkable as it is coming out from him not as a king who has deposed himself but as one who has the expectations of a father. He sees nothing but ingratitude in her gesture.

> Prepare my horses.
> Ingratitude, thou marble-hearted fiend,
> More hideous when thou show'st thee in a child
> Than the sea-monster. (1.4.236-39)

Lear never sees through this difference between kingship and kinship, between the formalised identity of the king (at this point his daughters are his substitutes) and the filial relation of the father, and in his behaviour there is a noticeable contradiction as he wants to put his claims on his daughters as a former king but they are ready to accept him only as their father. So Regan specifies: "For his particular I'll receive him gladly, / But not one follower" (2.2.463-64). In this question about retinue, what is noticeable is that the whole debate rises from Lear's forfeiting the right to rule and still desiring to retain the symbolic image of power. When he has given away the material basis of his power, the symbolic value of the monarch's body is also lost. Lear fails to realise that the centrality of power is dispersed with his dispersion of patrimony and that his retainers may appear to his daughters as agents of misrule. And when the daughters try to convince

him, he starts cursing them not as the former king but as the father. Thus in Lear's attempt to quantify love is mixed up a king's prerogatives and a father's affection. Lear cannot be expected to isolate his kingly image from his fatherly image - both of these are integrated in him, but the root of his tragic suffering lies in his failure to perceive the fact that his two villainous daughters view him in a dubious entity - as a former king who is their father too. That the two daughters are natural villains may be acknowledged, but their worries about Lear are politically correct. Lear, a mere titular head, can still pose a threat to their rule. Goneril shows her concern:

> I do beseech you
> To understand my purposes aright,
> As you are old and reverend, should be wise.
> Here do you keep a hundred knights and squires,
> Men so disordered, so debauched and bold
> That this our court, infected with their manners,
> Shows like a riotous inn. (1.4.216-22)

And Regan's worries are more obvious:

> How in one house
> Should many people under two commands
> Hold amity? 'Tis hard, almost impossible. (2.2.413-15)

So, they throw out Lear in the storm as a king who has resigned power but who can grab it again and displace them. But Lear interprets the expulsion differently, he sees the doors barred to a father not to a king.

This calls for an understanding of the concept of the 'king's two bodies'. Leonard Tennenhouse opines that Lear sharpens the contrast between kingship and kinship by violating the iconoclastic self of the king. The iconoclastic view demands that the King be inviolable, that his power be displayed through carnival and pageant that help to

project the King's glory in public, and that the scaffold remind the people of the punitive measures he is capable of undertaking. Further, his crown should act, as Tennenhouse writes, as "a corporate essence in perpetuity."[3] So, Lear has split the corporate image of the king by dispersing his power and wealth between his daughters. What happens is that Lear does this distribution of the kingdom in a way as if he is all-powerful to do that. Tennenhouse on the other hand suggests that Lear's act is not only a violation against nature, but also against the rule of primogeniture, which entails that the first child inherits the kingdom, and this inheritance is not to be shared. Lear through his act exhausts the king of his potential, and becomes, as the Fool aptly remarks, 'nothing'.

In explaining Lear's fouls, Tennenhouse writes:

> When he disperses his patrimony, Lear acts as if patronage no longer originates in the monarch; when he denounces Cordelia and hands her over in a dowerless marriage, he effectively renounces his role as *pater familias;* when he banishes Kent, he overturns the principle of fealty: and - perhaps more seriously than these - when he determines the rules of inheritance according to his will and not according to the principle of primogeniture, he appears to deny the metaphysics of the body politic and the special status of the king's blood. By dismantling his iconic body, Lear disperses these powers in a way that pits them against one another. This initiates a series of conflicts which threaten the stability of the state as well as the coherence of its signs and symbols.[4]

Tennenhouse argues that the Elizabethan *Lier* and Shakespeare's Jacobean *Lear* must be understood in terms of difference between each other. The Elizabethan tragedy emphasises the metaphysics of blood which attribute a wholeness to the being of the king, but in the Jacobean period the King's invulnerability is being questioned, and his

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[3] Leonard Tennenhouse, *Power on Display: The Politics of Shakespeare's Genres* (Methuen, New York & London, 1986), p. 134.

many selves - the sexual, the political, the carnavalesque are all judged separately. But the result soon becomes obvious as the King's several selves come into feud against one another. Tennenhouse is of the opinion that when the father-Lear is separated from the king-Lear the result seems to be disastrous - chaos strikes everywhere:

> Detached from their legitimate source of power in his body, the instruments of state turn against the monarch. . . . By privileging kinship over Kingship, Lear produces an unruly state where women can rule men, where daughters can rule their fathers, and where bastards can dispossess the aristocracy.[5]

In his reading of the play, Jonathan Dollimore takes a similar view as Tennenhouse's. Basing his study on a materialistic premise, he attempts to reject both the traditional Christian interpretation which mystifies Lear's suffering and the humanistic interpretation that holds that by an innate essential virtue Lear transcends the suffering or spiritualises it, and he rather views the play as essentially cancelling any idea of spiritual transcendence but to be concerned with property and power. He views that the causes that lead to the predicament of Lear's originate not in any spiritual dilemma but in the imbalance in material transaction. Thus, the dynamics that determine the priorities are those of power and property, and not of transcendent idealism.

> *King Lear* is, above all, a play about power, property and inheritance. . . . A catastrophic redistribution of power and property - and, eventually, a civil war - disclose the awful truth that these two things are somehow prior to the laws of human kindness rather than vice versa (likewise, as we have just seen, with power in relation to justice. Human values are no

[4] Tennenhouse, p. 135.
[5] Tennenhouse, p. 139.

antecedent to these material realities but are, on the contrary, in-formed by them).[6]

Having said that the values are dependent upon material factors, there can however be noticed that in Lear's "O, reason not the need" speech both the king's observation of the society and people and the father's unalloyed affection are expressed as inseparable entities. That is, while people and society are integrally linked through material ties allowing for flagrant self-interest to snap bonds as precious as the filial ties, there is an undercurrent of sympathy flowing defying the concrete segregation the material factors have enforced. The two tiers of truth converge in Lear's appeal in the speech. His explication of 'need' goes far beyond the simplified dichotomy between matter and spirit or between kingship and kinship, it is informed with the deeper inquiry that while man basically needs affection, he at the same time needs the material protection that provides him with food, shelter, clothing, and, above all, power. This material substantiality, in Lear's mind, is part of the true definition of man. Lear discards the idea of material possession for selfish purpose in achieving which man denigrates himself lower than the beast, and he also disapproves of the reductive view that sees man as an animal moved by mere physical hunger and needs. He endorses both having and building the material accoutrements for the advancement of society. So, his sense of 'need' reconciles spiritual elevation with the welfare development.

The speech is made just before Lear decides to go into the wild, refusing his daughters' scant hospitality. Theoretically nobody should be around on the stage when a soliloquy is delivered, but here many are present. Still it can be considered as a soliloquising speech because the substance of the speech shows that Lear is, from time to time, unaware of the presence of others.

O, reason not the need! Our basest beggars

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[6] Jonathan Dollimore, " 'King Lear' (c.1605-6) and Essentialist Humanism," in John Drakakis ed. *Shakespearean Tragedy* (Longman Critical Series, 1988), pp. 194-207.

Are in the poorest thing superfluous.
Allow not nature more than nature needs,
Man's life is cheap as beast's. Thou art a lady.
If only to go warm were gorgeous,
Why, nature needs not what thou, gorgeous, wear'st,
Which scarcely keeps them warm. But for true need -
You heavens, give me that patience, patience I need.
You see me here, you gods, a poor old man,
As full of grief as age, wretched in both.
If it be you that sirs these daughters' hearts
Against their father, fool me not so much
To bear it tamely. Touch me with noble anger,
And let not women's weapons, water drops,
Stain my man's cheeks. No, you unnatural hags,
I will have such revenges on you both
That all the world shall - I will do such things -
What they are , yet I know not; but they shall be
The terrors of the earth. You think I'll weep,
No, I'll not weep. I have full cause of weeping, [storm and tempest]
But the heart shall break into a hundred thousand flaws
Or ere I'll weep. - O Fool, I shall go mad! (2.2.439-59)

The speech, as pointed out earlier, is concerned with very many major themes. In the first seven lines Lear is concerned with the existentialist question of what bare minimum constitutes a man! His expulsion from his own kingdom truly starts his re-education into humility, and he realises, as Tennenhouse says, the true plight of the 'unaccommodated man':

> When Lear strips off his clothes to reveal himself as 'unaccommodated man', Shakespeare boldly reveals the natural body of the King as one that

> appears to bear little value in its own right. It has been stripped of retainers, patronage, patrlineal authority, the ability to raise an army, the power of the *pater familias*, and all the other features which attract the gaze of power. In and in itself, it is powerless. [7]

Man at the bare minimum is an animal. Lear's contention is that he refuses to accept man as that. Therein lies the reason for his suddenly reacting at Regan's matter-of-factness application of 'need'. Even the beggars in their scantiest clothes are having something more than they need. That is how a beggar is defined as a human. If man is viewed as only a natural creature he becomes as abject as beast. To show how man defines himself by living above the bare necessities, he gives a concrete example by referring to the women's dress, and suggests that clothes are used to keep oneself warm, but women are seen ( we can assume, he has both Goneril and Regan in mind as they may be wearing indecent dresses) wearing gorgeous and light clothes which cannot keep them warm, but which enhance their appearance. That is, the institution of clothing, like all other human institutions as that of marriage and law, is both an essentiality and a superficiality at the same time. Human civilisation, in Lear's sense, is inclusive of both the essential and the superficial. Tennenhouse maintains that "Lear has already equated clothing with his retainers, when he says to his daughter, 'Thou art a lady; / If only to go warm were gorgeous, / Why, nature needs not what thou gorgeous wear'st, / Which scarcely keep thee warm (II, iv, 267-70)'."[8]

What is ailing Lear here is that perhaps the institution of garments is a necessity rather than a superficiality. This also suggests by implication that the clothes imagery is apt to occur to his mind probably because only now he is beginning to face the consequence of abandoning his kingdom, an act through which we can assume he has been deprived of the supply of clothes he has been wont to. Thus a sense of loss creeping out of his several deprivations might be imperceptibly haunting his mind, which however merges with a greater quest for the true significance of his suffering: of all needs his utmost need

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[7] Tennenhouse, p. 139.
[8] Tennenhouse, p. 139.

is *patience*: "But for true need - / You heavens, give me that patience, patience I need" (2.2.444-5). Then he realises that the gods might be testing him, that they might be pushing his daughters against him, and the idea about the dubious function of the gods will again occur to him when the storm will rage at its intensest. However, here he prays for patience and the courage to face what fate may deal out to him. His self of the old king returns, and in noble fury he wants the gods to help him in bringing punishment upon his daughters. In doing this he needs to bury the woman (that is, the softer parts in him, like affection) in him, he steels himself against the daughters. This must not be taken in the sense of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth's praying for banishing the woman in them, because in their case manly courage is sought in order to enable them to execute a cruel act, whereas Lear's prayer is to give him enough resolution so that he can go against his two evil daughters, which by implication means that as he will go against them he will actually go against a part of his: "But yet thou art my flesh, my blood, my daughter - / Or rather a disease that's in my flesh, / Which I must needs call mine" (2.2.394-96). Such a conflict inheres in a filial relation, which does not bother either Macbeth or his wife. He next calls his daughters 'unnatural hags' (2.2.452), which coming upon his resolution is significant as he can go against his daughters only when he can consider them as unnatural. As they also become ungrateful, a paramount theme of the play is thus introduced: the unnatural and the ungrateful are now to be equated and considered as belonging to one group, and the natural and the grateful belonging to another group.

However, the dialectic is not so simple. In the beginning we find a Lear haughty, impatient, despotic, rash and mouthful with curses. First he curses Cordelia and holds her "As a stranger to my heart" (1.1.114), that is, the natural child is held unnatural, almost a redoing of how Gloucester holds his own natural son, Edgar, as inferior to his illegal son, Edmund. And, it so appears that Lear himself becomes unnatural as a father. He curses Goneril in the severest terms as many as four times in Act 1, Scene 4. He draws the image of the marble-hearted fiend for ingratitude which shows more hideously in her than in a monster (1.4.237-9). Then she is called a "Detested kite" (1.4.241). Hypothetically speaking, if we erase all our previous knowledge about the play, it will be

very difficult to come to terms with this Lear of the First Act. Through his comments it becomes clear that he is obsessed with the idea of conception, and all his curses blast women for their gestating quality. He wonders at his own ungrateful children, and questions how he could probably have given birth to them: the 'pelican daughters' as he would later say (3.4.71). He wishes that Goneril's womb became sterile, and that, "If she must teem, / [the gods should] Create her child of spleen, that it may live / And be a thwart disnatured torment to her"(1.4.260-2). The notion is also clear that Lear holds women responsible for breeding unnatural children. More importantly, though Lear does not recognise it, it is also a question of generation gap that bothers him. All these questions come up in sharp relief from time to time, though the climactic point comes in the storm scenes.

Then Lear's strength of character becomes manifest as he declares that his heart will break "into a hundred thousand flaws" (2.2.459) before he will weep. In a way, Lear may have thrown away his Kingship, but he, as Marilyn French suggests, "has never seen himself as anything but King."[9]

As the storm intensifies Lear confronts it both as one who has invited it as a course of punishment on his daughters and as its victim. The storm acts as a therapeutic course on Lear's consciousness, and he gains insight into certain social truths which will stay with him until his death.

The "Blow winds, and crack your cheeks" speech which is the centrepiece of the storm scenes is delivered in two parts with the Fool allowed to interrupt in the middle.

> Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! Rage, blow,
> You cataracts and hurricanoes, spout
> Till you have drenched our steeples, drowned the cocks!
> You sulph'rous and thought-executing fires,
> Vaunt -couriers of oak-cleaving thunderbolts,
> Singe my white head; and thou all-shaking thunder,

[9] Marilyn French, "The Late Tragedies," in John Drakakis, ed. *Shakespearean Tragedy*, 227.

> Strike flat the thick rotundity o'th' world,
> Crack nature's moulds, all germens spill at once
> That makes ingrateful man. (3.2.1-9)

The first line with all monosyllabic words enforces Lear's rage. He wants a complete catastrophe. The natural forces - winds, hurricanes, fires, and thunderbolts - all are asked to participate in this wild mayhem to materialise his curses on his daughters. The phrase, "thought-executing fires" may need annotation. Muir records Johnson's explanation of the phrase as 'doing execution with rapidity equal to thought'.[10] But, the phrase also implies fire which can burn human thoughts. The word 'singe' at line 6 supports the association. The whole curse is prayed for to work upon and destroy the rotundity of the earth, which by implication refers to the roundness of a woman in gestation. Lear's attitude to women takes on a further twist as he wonders how ungrateful children do get born. Though Lear holds women responsible as mothers of children, but the word 'germens', meaning 'seeds', reminds us of sperms responsible for procreation, and more so because the next word 'spill', meaning destruction here, also brings to our mind the way sperms are released inside the vagina; hence Lear may be suggesting that not only the womb wherein is germinated the foetus should be destroyed, but also the procreative faculty of man should be destroyed. The question then is which nature is Lear inviting? Lear's asking for 'nature's mould' to be cracked also reminds us of Edmund's apostrophe to nature: "Thou, nature, art my goddess" (1.2.1). Explaining the difference in Lear's invocation of nature and that of Edmund, a critic writes that Edmund saw in nature an amoral force, and Lear the potential for mindless violence.[11]

> The scene opens with one of Lear's most reverberating and torrential speeches. . . .The speech is a fine example of Shakespeare's mastery of the spoken, or dramatic, poetry. Although the text has full stops at the ends of lines 1 and 6 (probably inserted by early printers) there is no real stop, or

[10] Kenneth Muir, ed., *King Lear* (The Arden Shakespeare), p. 100.
[11] *Cliff's Notes*, p. 49.

> pause, in the delivery of the speech between the opening shout of "Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks" to the phrase "Singe my white head" of line 6. This pause is only to allow the actor to take breath, since it is immediately followed by another long, continuing sentence from "And thou all shaking thunder" down to "That all makes ingrateful man." We must always try to imagine any speech as it should be given from the stage, but even reading this one in silence we get the impression of a cascade of language, of words and phrases that seem to tumble over one another ("cataracts and hurricanoes . . . sulp'rous and thought-executing . . . Vaunt-couriers . . . oak-cleaving thunder-bolts") in such a way that it is impossible to imagine the speech given in anything but a rage verging on hysteria. The preceding scene's description of the half-maddened Lear who "Bids the wind blow the earth into the sea" now confronts us on the stage. The Elizabethan stage's lack of technical devices of light and sound for volcanic fury, creates the storm for us. [12]

Then the Fool interrupts:

> O nuncle, court holy water in a dry house is better than this rain-water out o' door. Good nuncle, in, ask thy daughters blessing. Here's a night pities neither wise men nor fools. (3.2.10-3)

The Fool's interruption serves a two-fold purpose. It brings down, as Weimann suggests, Lear's high-flown ravings to the level of plain reality where suffering humanity in the face of a great storm seeks nothing but shelter even in the house of the 'ingrateful' children[13], and the other purpose served is that while in the first half of the speech Lear conceived of the storm as a natural force on his side that he thought would attack his daughters' houses, he is now made to realise that the storm is also attacking him. French

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[12] *Cliff's Note*, pp. 48-9.

argues that the very indifference of nature is "partly responsible for his breaking in this scene."[14] Weimann sees the storm scene as bringing in a sense of equity in Lear which is again reflected in the simple language used by the Fool which is contrasted with the elevated language of Lear. The Fool's interjection to 'court holy water' in between Lear's two speeches has already been pointed out. Technically speaking, it also serves to show, as Weimann has pointed out, two different styles highlighting two different attitudes. Lear's recognition of the true nature of humanity emerges as much from his changing attitude as from his adapting himself to the language of suffering humanity.

> The contrast between elevated metaphor and simple, everyday speech here sharpens the effect of both. But the difference in meter, assonance, and style produces more than a formal contrast; for it signalises the distance between two widely divergent attitudes. No sooner has the raging King adjured the 'all-shaking thunder' to flatten the earth and 'Crack nature's moulds' than 'natural' common sense comes to the fore in the person of the pragmatic Fool, who would rather compromise principles than face the torrent.[15]

Lear continues:

> Rumble thy bellyful; spit, fire; spout, rain.
> Nor rain, wind, thunder, fire are my daughters.
> I tax not you, you elements, with unkindness.
> I never gave you kingdom, called you children.
> You owe me no subscription. Then let fall
> Your horrible pleasure. Here I stand your slave,
> A poor, infirm, weak and despised old man,

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[13] Robert Weimann, "Shakespeare's Theatre: Tradition and Experiment," in John Drakakis ed. *Shakespearean Tragedy* (Longman Critical Series, London, 1988), pp. 117-52.
[14] French, p. 246.
[15] Weimann, p. 125.

But yet I call you servile ministers,
That will with two pernicious daughters join
Your high-engendered battles 'gainst a head
So old and white as this. O, ho, 'tis foul! (3.2.14-25)

Ironically, however, it is Lear and his few companions who suffer and not his daughters. So, in the second half of the speech he sees through the pattern of allegiance, and now he invites the storm to attack him on behalf of his daughters. The first four lines of this speech are all one-liners, uttered with gasping pauses, to indicate Lear's fury as well as his infirmity of voice. At this point, the implication of the word 'ingarateful', uttered before the Fool's interruption, continues taking on further significance. He does not fault the storm for being so pernicious as it owes him nothing: "I never gave you kingdom" (3.2.16). A subtle psychological shift in Lear can be noted here. As he realises that the forces of nature whom he took up as friends in the previous part have now turned out to be as unfriendly to him as his daughters, one of his strongest traditional attachments is decisively severed, he is left alone to himself - "A poor, infirm, weak and despised old man" (3.2.20). He will no longer address nature with the same confidence as he did earlier in "Hear, nature, hear, dear goddess, hear" (1.4.254) speech, because he has discovered nature to be a force beyond his control. The similarity between how nature treats him and how Cordelia did cannot escape attention. The storm has disappointed Lear in the same way as Cordelia initially did. Lear had full confidence in Cordelia, but her refusal to act according to his wish rebuffed him as grievously as the storm has hurt him now inasmuch as awakening in him the feeling of dissociation with nature. More importantly, however, the present disillusionment at the act of the storm turns his mind back to his first disillusionment with Cordelia, and as he is now able to appreciate the movement of the storm objectively, he, in consequence, is also able to see the justification of Cordelia's behaviour. Distancing himself from the storm, or detaching the moral attribute from nature, he sees the storm not only as a neutral agent, but also as more powerful than to be ever bridled by his wishes. So he now realises that the way he wanted to bridle the wishes of Cordelia was wrong. It brings him to the further belief

that there are greater things in heaven and earth, and essentially he alone is not the mover of things. This Canute-like feeling is enabling him now to realise that he made the wrong choice between his daughters. Not for the first time though, because earlier he dropped at least two hints indicative of the dawning of the right sense in him, but they were mere hints, and the storm converts them into full-fledged assertions.

Noticing the indifference he was a subject to at Goneril's house, one of the knights reported to him: "My lord, I know not what the matter is, but to my judgment your highness is not entertained with that ceremonious affection as you were wont" (1.4.55-7). Lear agreed: "Thou but rememberest me of mine own conception. I have perceived a most faint neglect of late, which I have rather blamed as mine own jealous curiosity than as a very pretence and purpose of unkindness" (1.4.65-8). Then he suddenly asked for the Fool, maybe to forget his disappointment with Goneril. The Knight replied, "Since my young lady's going into France, sir, the fool hath much pined away" (1.4.71-2). The reference to Cordelia at once cut him to the quick. Because to be reminded of Cordelia or for him to begin to remember her, let alone to be soft to her, was a breach of his kingly vows. And, earlier when Kent pleaded him to revoke his gift (1.1.163), he decided to banish Kent not for anything else but for asking him to "break our [his] vows" (1.1.167). So, as soon as the Knight referred to Cordelia he sharply snubbed him: "No more of that, I have noted it well" (1.4.73). Lear is quick to resist the faintest sign of re-emergence of his feeling for Cordelia, thus punctuating by contrast how deeply his inner self is still preoccupied with the memory of Cordelia. In his tête-à-tête with the Fool, when he was outwitted, he happened to remember Cordelia: "I did her wrong" (1.5.25), which may be considered as his first recognition of the crime he did to Cordelia. All these add up to Lear's present recognition of the storm's neutrality which, in turn, expands his vision as to see the virtuous objectivity of Cordelia.

About Lear's realisation a critic remarks:

> The storm also has the effect of forcing Lear into a real consideration of his position, and later (at 3.4.106) into the position of "unaccommodated man" in general. Like most tragic heroes, Lear begins the play secure in the knowledge of his power and place in the world - knowledge which proves to be tragically misguided. His daughters have begun the process of forcing him toward a new appraisal, and the storm completes it. "Here I stand your slave, / A poor, infirm, weak and despised old man" is not a line that the Lear of Act I could have spoken. This is the humility (although it will give way to surges of anger and madness) which is the beginning of knowledge.[16]

Apart from their thematic bearing on the story of Lear, the storm scenes have drawn interesting comments from various critics in terms of how they have been presented, and critics have generally expressed their satisfaction over the effective balance Shakespeare has procured between the technicalities of presenting a storm on the stage and grounding it as amenable to the context.

One of the technical difficulties regarding the staging of the storm scenes is how to allow the actor playing Lear make himself heard above the rumbling noise of the storm. Bradley, for example, thinks that Lear's speeches are meant to go beyond the stage in significance. The scenes (2.2; 3.1; 3.2; 3.3; 3.4; 3.5; 3.6), according to Bradley, have so rich poetry in them that we are in the risk of losing their beauty while watching the play as our eyes remain engrossed in the spectacle, and our ears remain inactive. So, a conflict between sense and imagination may arise, and to solve this Bradley suggests that if the lines are allowed to take on an emblematic significance then not only our eyes but also our imagination will be immensely gratified. Noticing the immense perturbations of Lear's mind being so exquisitely expressed in the most effective poetry, Bradley asserts that if any impact the storm-scenes are to produce that is not on our senses but on our imagination.

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[16] *Cliff's Note*, pp. 48-9.

> For imagination, that is to say, the explosions of Lear's passion, and the bursts of rain and thunder, are not, what for the senses they must be, two things, but manifestations of one thing. It is the powers of the tormented soul that we hear and see in the 'groans of roaring wind and rain and the 'sheets of fire'; and they that, at intervals almost more overwhelming, sink back into darkness and silence. . . . Surely something not less, but much more, than these helpless words convey, is what comes to us in these astounding scenes; and if, translated thus into the language of prose, it becomes confused and inconsistent, the reason is simply that it itself is poetry, and such poetry as cannot be transferred to the space behind the footlights, but has its being only in imagination. Here then is Shakespeare at his very greatest, but not the mere dramatist Shakespeare.[17]

Maynard Mack also demands the same directional discretion as Bradley in staging the storm-scenes. He suggests that the director taking help of the modern acoustics should not overplay the scenes, neither should he try to attach his own interpretation of the scenes as he might risk supplying signals beyond the text. Like Bradley, Mack prefers to consider the audience's imagination as the last court of appeal for the success of these scenes. Commenting on the directional account of Herbert Blau who, in association with Peter Brook, produced a version of *King Lear* in a ballet-form, Mack, though appreciative of the presentation, criticises it as he thinks the superb spectacle took the attention of the audience away from the play itself.

> Some of the ideas [Blau's ideas] here are fascinating. They would be superbly at home in *King Lear* rewritten as a tragic ballet. But the homely

[17] A. C. Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy* (MacMillan, Pocket Papermack, '71), pp. 221-2. His footnote appearing on page 222 is worth quoting. "Nor is it believable that Shakespeare, whose means of imitating a storm were so greatly inferior even to ours had the stage-performance only or chiefly in view in composing these scenes. He may not have thought of readers (or he may), but he must in any case have written to satisfy his own imagination. . . . I may observe that in our present theatres, owing to the use of elaborate

> circumstance that the reader of this hypnotic account must not lose sight of is that, onstage for thirty-five minutes during the heath scenes, three sequences of electronic sounds - some "fierce, indescribably active," one sequence a complete variable occurring "at unpredictable moments," all the sequences overlaid by wild screams and accompanied by "incessant motion . . . the muscular projection of the interior nature of madness" - competed for the spectator's attention with Shakespeare's words. We may safely guess which factor won. But this, I suspect, was not the only or perhaps the chief damage. Shakespeare's words were intended, with the help of a few rumblings of cannon balls in the Elizabethan theatre's upper storey, to produce a storm in the audience's imagination. When instead the storm is produced *for* the audience with such brilliance of detail by non-textual means, Shakespeare's text is left without a function, and so is the audience's imagination. The spectator understands the storm in the sense or senses the director has attached to it; he is not compelled, as he is by Shakespeare's poetry, to grope for meanings and relations and compound them for himself.[18]

Thus, the microcosm (Lear himself) and the macrocosm (nature, or the storm itself) work in unison to portray the storm that is raging through Lear. Shakespeare has visualised the storm through the words charged with kinetic imagery, and with very little help of the stage artefacts. For Lear the very language is the first medium as it has been in Lady Macbeth's invocation of the spirits or Macbeth's address to the night. Depending on Johnson's concept of the dramatic illusion, it can be said that the purpose of the storm scenes is to recreate an identical storm in the imagination of the audience, to enable him to feel the duress Lear is undergoing.

In fact, the emblematic core of the storm scenes is ingrained throughout the play. Mack, for example, reads *King Lear* as a play where the immediacy of the situations

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scenery, the three storm-scenes are usually combined, with disastrous effect. Shakespeare . . . interposed between them short scenes of much lower tone."

takes on the emblematic and parabolic significance thus locking together the objectivity of the context with the metaphysics of the subject. While he discovers *King Lear*'s background to have originated in romance, Morality Play, and archetypal folk tradition[19], he also finds that because of this varied influence from other sources the action and character are not projected in one-to-one correspondence, that is, they are not woven together, or do not emanate from each other. Thus a very silly kind of action, Mack suggests, like Lear's attempt at having his daughters' love for him expressed in quantified terms can and do lead to very serious consequences. Kent's insulting of Oswald, for example, indirectly paves the way for the old King to be driven out in the storm - a phenomenon that justifies Lear's complaint that he is more sinned against than sinning. Observing this apparent lack of causality in the play Mack holds that *King Lear* dramatises the "inscrutability of energies that the human will has power to release."[20]

We have already noted Lear's cursing nature, and that especially against women. That attitude is also predominant in the storm scenes. It is not for the first time that he utters his curses on his daughters here, but much of the rage can be traced back to Lear's having been disillusioned with his daughters. His curse becomes sharper, as we noted earlier, against Goneril, which verges on anti-feminist utterance. In one single scene (1.4), Goneril has been cursed as many as four times.

Marilyn French, in her discussion of the play, asserts that the gender questions are predominant in the play. Through her gender-oriented perspective, she sees the masculine principle in the play as having endorsed the formal identities of society like Kingship, position, and paternity while the feminine principle is considered as the underside, the unruly one, the code that forms out of our inner identity, the basic character. That is, she thinks that patriarchal values are only concerned with our formal life whose ethos are discipline, control and order, while matriarchal values sustain the rebellious ego, the tendency to rebel, and the lack of order.

French argues that Lear, by dispensing himself with power and authority actually recognises the feminist aspects of the inner growth. That is, he gains humanity, the

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[18] Mack, pp. 36-7.
[19] Mack, p. 66.

natural and original, by resigning the formal aspects of kingship. Like Canute he has to learn about nature's indifference the hard way. Her argument is that his identity as the king which has so far bound him in the masculine 'mould' is cracked in the storm scenes. In her judgment, Lear, in the first three acts, is shown being stripped of those credentials which pass by the name of humanness but which are far away from the actual humanness. Explaining 'humanness' as *not* power, she suggests that Lear by losing his kingly power comes close to actual power, the power of the illegitimate, that is the uncharted, but more pervasive power of human affection. But as long as he confuses personal power with temporal power, he fails to see the real humanity. French comes up with the brilliant idea that to look for a tragic flaw in Lear is unjustified, because this very idea of tragic flaw is a male conception, and from that premise Lear may be said as having a flawed character, but, on the contrary, Lear is going through a phase which brings him closer and closer to basic humanity, and since this humanity sans power is accommodated by the female principle of subversion, so Lear is not showing any flaw but rather a virtue in being capable of abandoning his temporal power. He may be held as having a tragic flaw from a male premise, but from a feminist angle, Lear is learning the right kind of truth. He deprives himself of the temporal power in order to understand the pangs of the deprived. Thus, concerns with power and authority which adjudge male morality have been questioned by Shakespeare in the most profound way.

> *King Lear* is Shakespeare's most profound repudiation of the morality of power and control based on the relation of man to nature. The tragedy presents an agonising picture of the consequences of such a morality. . . . What Shakespeare offers as the ground of humanness, as that which makes us *not* part of nature, makes us aliens in our home, is a morality based on sensitivity and responsiveness, on seeing and feeling others, on cooperation with nature which, even as it sets us off from the savage nature of the play, decreases our alienation. And power is utterly an impediment to this. . . . Lear moves from 'masculinity' to 'femininity'. In

[20] Mack, p. 96

> the opening scene, dressed in majesty, he stands on power and banishes love. For the next act and a half, he roars and rages, but begins, little by little, to cry. And then he learns to see, to feel. He opens his mind to others - to the poor, to his Fool's shivering, to the necessities by which all humans are bound. By the time he meets Gloucester on the heath, he has discovered that pomp, status and authority are charges designed to hide us from ourselves. By the time he and Cordelia are captured, he is no longer concerned with power-in-the-world, or with revenge. He cares only about the quality of life, choosing to sing in the prison that is life, enjoying the day, savouring the 'mystery of things' (5.3.16).[21]

As against this matriarchal reading of the play, one point can be raised that while Cordelia dies the female champion of the cause also dies. Over the ages, the death of Cordelia has raised critical storms. Nahum Tate changed the ending of the play in the eighteenth century, keeping Cordelia alive and married. But it did not survive. One good explanation is that Cordelia is after all a French Queen, and for a very patriotic reason, Shakespeare cannot make England suffer defeat in the hands of its arch enemy, i.e., France. Another more cogent reason is forwarded by Tennenhouse, whose anti-feminist reading asserts that Cordelia has to die in order to let the question of inheritance remain open for a male inheritor. The loss of Cordelia may shock Lear, and his senses may not work logically, whereas we guess that here Cordelia is not allowed to live because of the necessity of keeping the patriarchy alive.

Tennenhouse explains:

> England's kingship system allowed modification of strict patrilineage that made the requisite term 'father'; the blood could be - and Shakespeare's audience well knew it had recently been - embodied in a female. But the relationship of power to gender is obviously *not* the issue this play asks an

[21] French, "The Late Tragedies," in Drakakis ed. *Shakespearean Tragedy*, pp. 254-5.

> audience to consider. Rather, in re-establishing the bond between kinship and kingship, this play wants us to think of them both in male terms. Thus the Gloucester / Edgar relationship provides the site where the power of patriarchy re-enters the world. For the same reason Albany remains in line for the throne . . . . Were Cordelia rather than Albany and Edgar to remain at the end of the play, the crown would descend to her upon Lear's death; either that or the play would challenge the metaphysics of blood all over again in giving the crown to a male. It is more than coincidental, then - or rather it is coincidental in precisely the way that ideology arranges the coincidence of such events - that no direct heir to the throne of Britain remains alive at the end of *King Lear*.[22]

Apart from this, the quality of life which French says Lear has achieved may not be the most comprehensive reading either, because his utterance of "We two alone will sing like birds i'th' cage" (5.3.9) shows him as politically reduced to a nonentity, while the play, on the contrary, suggests that Lear has never lost his arcane sense of politics. It is impossible to accept the view that pure and straightforward humanity stripped of the tags of power and control, influence and manoeuvring which Lear is supposed to have learnt through suffering can be the main thematic burden of the play. Lear rather realises the significance of the accoutrements of Kingship, the valid recognition of what actually makes a king. He, like Prince Hall, has gone through the process of learning the base strings of humanity. He identifies himself with the wretched, but that is with a view to uplifting their lot, not to allow them to degrade themselves further. Cordelia comes forward with her power to restore Lear to power, and after she fails, Edgar takes up the charge and provides a funeral passage for the dead king. Thus in the storm scenes, what Lear learns about is the power of humanity, not humanity without power. He is feeling sympathy for the helpless, but not helpless with himself. He proudly declares that he is every inch a king (4.5.107). So, when he encounters Tom o' Bedlam, his queries about true nature of man start, but even then he sees at him from above, from his once

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[22] Tennenhouse, p. 142.

powerfully-held kingly vantage point, and he would rather embrace Tom in his fold by elevating him rather than lowering himself to Tom's position. So, French may not be arguing correctly when she thinks that Lear becomes truly human when he is bereft of his power, rather it seems more likely that in the back of his mind he is always, as French herself suggested, conscious of his being the King, and in that capacity of his being further responsible for the comfort of others. Lear becomes humanised, but it is as a king that he is humanised. The little hovel becomes the minuscule form of his kingdom, a place where he can go forth with open arms to embrace humanity, with the difference that in absence of the royal formalities of the palace, his perceptions here are immediately realised.

And, when he encounters Tom o' Bedlam in the hovel during the storm, he lets out his shock in a catechism:

> Is man no more than this? Consider him well. Thou owest the worm no silk, the beast no hide, the sheep no wool, the cat no perfume. Ha, here's three on 's are sophisticated; thou art the thing itself. Unaccommodated man is no more but such a bare, forked animal as thou art. (3.4.96-102)

Here it is easy to be reminded of Hamlet's query about the nature of man:

> What a piece of work is a man! How noble in reason, how infinite in faculty, in form and moving how express and admirable, in action how like an angel, in apprehension how like a god - the beauty of the world, the paragon of animals! And yet to me what is this quintessence of dust? Man delights not me - no, nor woman neither, though by your smiling you seem to say so. (2.2.303-12)

It may be observed that though Lear and Hamlet inquire after the nature of man, they do it from totally different perspectives. And again, though both utter these speeches when they feel disillusioned about life, Hamlet's speech is more related to his mental

condition at the given moment, that is, it is more circumstantial than Lear's. Hamlet does not question the traditional supremacy of man over other creatures, neither is he suggesting that man's status is actually lowered, but what he says is that since his mind is out of mirth he fails to see anything worthy in man. This pessimistic view of man is partly a continuation of his feeling of being imprisoned in which the earth seemed to him to be "a sterile promontory" (2.2.101), and partly rises from his disappointment with life - his mother has married his uncle, and his father's Ghost has been sending him strange messages, and thus appears more like a personalised piece of philosophy that might change or might not depending on what he is going to encounter in future. Lear on the other hand speaks out the lines from a sense of certitude highlighting the economic equity which he has discovered to be lacking in human society. Lear's statements therefore are more grounded in a social matrix, and more conclusively reached than Hamlet's. While Hamlet judges man from a philosophical perspective, Lear judges him against a social paradigm - mainly centring upon the classified nature of society determined by power and money.

And the economic iniquity becomes obvious to him only when he has lost the temporal authority. In an attempt to hold himself even with the condition of the Bedlam he tries to unbutton his shirt. In Lear's realisation concern for the material world occupies a significant space; he shows a latent awareness about the differences in value of things, and when ironically he squanders away his kingdom and because of it is driven into the storm, he cannot but see the social inequality in its most flagrant exposure in the form of Tom o' Bedlam. Later the blind Gloucester presents him with yet another nightmarish version of the social injustice: "A man may see how this world goes with no eyes; look with thine ears" (4.5.146-47). The perception leads him naturally to bring up other identical vices as equally contemptible. He insists that morality and judiciary are two most threatened areas. Adultery is as fervently practised as perjury. So, in extreme disillusionment about the ways of the world, Lear utters: "Let copulation thrive" (4.5.112). Nobody dies for adultery. His daughters are in the back of his mind all this while:

Down from the waist
They're centaurs, though women all above.
But to the girdles do the gods inherit;
Beneath is all the fiend's. (4.5.121-24)

Women as lechers is not a vision unique to Lear, because, as in the discussion on *Othello*, we have shown that the same view about woman is expressed by Iago and Othello. The point is that Lear finds the proliferation of illicit sexuality as being encouraged and patronised by people from above. He is not as yet sure what to make of this riddle as what he received from his daughters that were "Got 'tween lawful sheets" (4.5.115) (meaning Goneril and Regan), and what, on the contrary, Gloucester got from his 'kinder' 'bastard son'(meaning Edmund, though Lear will be in no position to know about Edmund's villainy). He has made the same confusion of choice regarding Gloucester's two sons (though in this case, following Gloucester's own wrong assessment) as he made with his own daughters. This kind of mixed-up judgment continues until it finds an apt expression in the phrase, "handy-dandy" (4.5.149). The phrase literally means, "Take your choice,"[23] and implies a confusion in the moral judgment.[24] Lear is out of his wits, but as Gloucester "stumbled when he saw" (4.1.19) and now, without his eyes, sees "feelingly" 4.5.145), so does Lear seem to achieve clearer visions when under intolerable suffering he loses his mental balance. In his madness, being freed from any awareness of the formal bindings of society, he can now probe, as Clemen says, "beneath the surface of the apparent and mendacious, the spurious and conventional."[25] He realises that the societal pattern is based not on any sensible distribution of quality and merit, or who deserves what, but rather on the pyramidal structure in which the people with power and money dictate over the people at the bottom. Lear seems to have perceived that in a regency the hierarchical pattern is absolute, and when the system becomes corrupt, maldistribution of duties occurs and the

[23] Muir, p. 168.
[24] See John F. Danby, *Shakespeare's Doctrine of Nature: A study of* King Lear (Faber, London, 1949).

[25] Clemen, p. 175.

deserving people do not necessarily go to the top, neither do they get the reward, and the unlawful do not get the punishment either. So, if the scales are reversed the judge can as well be the offender, and the situation becomes a kind of handy-dandy. Shakespeare explores the dramatic potentiality of the handy-dandy situation between the punishers and the sinners more fully in *Measure for Measure* where Angelo is a representative character who, driven by sexual urge, is about to confuse the spirit of the biblical dictum - 'Judge not that ye be not judged' (that is, as a justice do not give verdict on an offender for offences which you may have committed if you were in his circumstances). So, the difference between the judge and the offender may be more tenuous than can be imagined. King Lear on the other hand is placing the idea as fully realised.

> See how yon justice rails upon yon simple thief. Hark in thine ear: change places, and handy-dandy, which is the justice, which is the thief? Thou hast seen a farmer's dog bark at a beggar? (4.5.147-51)

Thus, power and authority, and in the modern time, money and publicity, can influence justice, and even the pet animal of the powerful is more powerful than the downtrodden. Then in his next speech he provides a catalogue that explains the several forms of injustices prevailing in society:

> An the creature run from the cur, there thou mightst behold the great image of authority. A dog's obeyed in office. (4.5.154-55)

Instantly Lear's furious remark at Oswald for his insolent behaviour comes to our mind: " ... you whoreson dog, you slave, you cur" (1.4.78-9). His catalogue continues:

> Thou rascal beadle, hold thy bloody hand.
> Why dost thou lash that whore? Strip thy own back.
> Thou hotly lusts to use her in that kind
> For which thou whip'st her. (4.5.156-159)

Lust is punished often by the one who is more lustful.

> The usurer hangs the cozener.
> Through tattered clothes great vices do appear;
> Robes and furred gowns hide all. Plate sin with gold,
> And the strong lance of justice hurtless breaks;
> Arm it in rags, a pygmy's straw does pierce it.
> None does offend, none, I say none. I'll able 'em. (4.5.159-64)

The precise description of perjured judiciary consists of garments imagery because Lear, after his abdication of power, has been in association with half-clad Tom, and himself presumably been moving around with a single set of wearing, and the other companions like the disguised Kent or the gouged Gloucester cannot be expected to be wearing anything fanciful. So, his royal robe presents a contrast with that worn by the lower strata of people. As King he was the chief arbiter of his country, and now he has the scope to realise how thoroughly he might have been hoodwinked by his own courtiers - people who not only were wearing dress plated with gold, but who might have also taken advantage of their close proximity with him, and thus managed to evade justice, subjecting others to suffering. Lear's pronouncements are grafted with images that clarify the social truths he is uncovering for himself, though not without the subtle suggestion that he feels bad why he did not discover them before. He wants to make for the lost time. A compassionate Lear learns fellow-feeling. He does neither want to enter the hovel before the Fool, nor before the Bedlam beggar does. The quintessential message that the storm scenes holds out for Lear is that he must relate himself to others. The sense of social relatedness comes to him in the wake of his suffering in the hands of his daughters, and, in consequence, through his suffering in the storm. Both human agents and nature are employed to teach him.

What the play, *King Lear*, asks, as Maynard Mack writes, is

> . . . what is it that makes a man a 'fellow'? Is it being born to menial status, as for the many servingmen to whom the word is applied? Is it total loss of status, as for Edgar, Kent, and Lear, to each of whom the word is applied? Or is it simply being man - everyone's fellow by virtue of a shared humanity? During the heath scenes, when Lear, Kent, Edgar, and the Fool becomes fellows in misery as well as in lack of status, this question too is given a poignant visual statement. Gloucester, coming to relieve Lear, rejects one member of the motley fellowship, his own son poor Tom: "In, fellow, there into the hovel." But Lear, who has just learned to pray for all such naked fellows, refuses to be separated from his new companion and finally is allowed to "take the fellow" into shelter with him. For, as Edgar will ask us to remember in the next scene but one, ". . . the mind much suffrance doth o'erskip, / When grief hath mates, and bearing fellowship."[26]

In Mack's view, therefore, Lear establishes a brotherhood of the have-nots on the heath. The perception, that has been forwarded in the present essay, however, is that even when this brotherhood is established Lear never sinks his image of the King; it is his patronal figure (his age, his white hair, and his once-held position as recognised by others) that brings about the chemistry of fraternity. The feeling that Lear has generated is not that he has done well by shunning his kingly responsibilities, and that he will not like to be a king again, but rather that, one day he will restore himself to power, and when he does so, he will not repeat the past mistakes, as he will be careful to apply his learning on the heath to actual social situations. Though Shakespeare has not written a straight-forward morality play, for that matter he never wrote so, *King Lear* is his most reformative play - and thus, in such a pattern, it is required that the protagonist will always return to his place of beginning having learnt the necessary lessons.

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[26] Maynard Mack, pp.105-6.

Though apparently radically different in his approach either from Bradley or from Mack, Stephen Greenblatt views the play, more like Mack, as a social play. Greenblatt's thesis is that all values in *Lear* do emerge from, and are determined by, a social context, but which are given a spiritual covering as if Lear is receiving messages from the supernatural agents like the storm. In order to get to Greenblatt's point, a brief summary of his narrative is necessary here. He considers that a literary text should be viewed as conducting an exchange and negotiations with other non-literary phenomena, and in that the Elizabethan stage itself was an institution that was dependent on other institutions like the church or, opposed to it, the art of the exorcists in defining itself. Greenblatt points to the fact that while writing *King Lear* Shakespeare was reading a book entitled, *A Declaration of Egregious Popish Impostures*, published by one Samuel Harsnett in 1603, which contained elaborate case-studies of exorcism that were meant to be condemned as sinful acts, but that might have attracted Shakespeare as effective theatrical tricks to be employed on the Elizabethan stage. The significance of exorcism lay in the impression made upon the minds of the spectators, though the performers playing the exorcists knew that whatever was shown was not true. As Harsnett's campaign was against exorcism, he found the theatre a suitable model to cite to let the spectators understand that "what [in exorcism] seems spontaneous is rehearsed, what seems involuntary carefully crafted, [and] what seems unpredictable scripted."[27] The problem, however, is that the exorcists tried to insist on the spectacle to be identified as reality, whereas the audience in a theatre, as Johnson suggested through his theory of dramatic illusion, knows that the mistaking of the theatre as real is only temporary. As the exorcists lost ground and their trade fell, the Elizabethan stage took up their devices for increased stage effects. For example, showing people under demonic possession proved to be a good theatrical show. Such demoniacal scenes on stage, now freed of the supernatural connection, were thought of harmless-stage spectacles. This is precisely what Greenblatt understands as negotiations - an interaction between the exorcists' craft and that of the theatre. That is, the stage is benefited by some extra-stage phenomenon.

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[27] Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1988, rpt. 1992), p. 106.

Coming to Lear's addresses to the demonic forces in the storm scenes, Greenblatt suggests that Lear here negotiates with forces which have lost their exorcistic quality. That is the forces have to be imagined as effective agents, whereas they are not. But nevertheless they can be evoked basing on the success of the exorcists in the Elizabethan society. Like Mack, Greenblatt also views the play to have completely confined itself to the social plane. Thus, Lear in the storm-scenes projects the truth that though the theatrical effects may have been created by the booming sounds of the storm and by his own evocations of the gods and devils, thus creating a supernatural impression, what turns out to be true is that Lear has been tortured by his own people from within the immediate family circle. The internecine struggle of a family that also embraces a larger society is the significance, Greenblatt, like Mack, finds.

> *King Lear* is haunted by a sense of rituals and beliefs that are no longer efficacious, that have been emptied out. The characters appeal again and again to the pagan gods, but the gods remain utterly silent. Nothing answers to human questions but human voices; nothing breeds about the heart but human desires; nothing inspires awe or terror but human suffering and human depravity. For all the invocation of the gods in *King Lear* it is clear that there are no devils.[28]

And he continues,

> 'Let them anatomize Regan,' Lear raves, 'see what breeds about her heart. Is there any cause in nature that makes these hard hearts' (3.6.76-8)? We know that there is no cause beyond nature; the voices of evil in the play - 'Thou, Nature, art my goddess'; 'What need one?'; 'Bind fast his corky arms' - do not well up from characters who are possessed. I have no wish to live in a culture where men believe in devils; I fully grasp that the torturers of this world are all too human. Yet Lear's anguished question

[28] Greenblatt, p. 119.

> insists on the pain this understanding brings, a pain that reaches beyond the King. Is it a relief to understand that the evil was not visited upon the characters by demonic agents but released from the structure of the family and the state by Lear himself?[29]

In the true sense, *King Lear* is concerned with the relational aspect of human society both within the family circuit and beyond. It shows in dramatic form the convergence and interaction of the three levels of existence assigned to the Elizabethan world picture: the microcosm, the body-politic, and the macrocosm.[30] The interaction is quite fluid, and when the storm-scenes are considered we see that this interaction is both interdependent and independent. At one stage the storm looks to be the metaphor of Lear's own storm raging inside, and we have quoted Bradley and Mack as preferring to see the storm in that emblematic light, whereas Lear himself realises that the storm is indicative of forces and energies that he has neither any control upon, nor any hope to call them to his aid. Pointing out the paradox, French says that though the storm is looked upon by Lear as the punishing agent for his daughters, it is Lear and his few peers who are directly hit by the storm. The monolithic design which critics like Tillyard, being induced by the concept of the Great Chain of Being, wanted to see ingrained in the Elizabethan psyche, of which Shakespeare is a mere representative, may not be effective all through so far as *King Lear* is concerned. Though the morality inhered in the Great Chain of Being that everything affects everything else, that is, Lear's affliction becoming recognisably projected in the other two bodies - the body-politic (the state) and the macrocosm, yet certain features in *King Lear* show that Shakespeare was not quite working under such a doctrine. In fact, the views that are forwarded by Dollimore, Tennenhouse and Greenblatt are determined to read the play from a materialistic premise, thus refusing to accept the possibility of any emblematic concept being highlighted by the play. While Dollimore contends that in the list of priority, the concern with property and wealth does precede the ethical judgment, Tennenhouse recognises that for very practical purposes of the

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[29] Greenblatt, p. 122.

[30] See E.M.W. Tillyard, *The Elizabethan World Picture*, (Chatto & Windus, London, 1943).

male hegemony, one of which is to keep the patrilineage intact, the death of Cordelia is made inevitable. Likewise, Greenblatt forwards the idea that the invocation of the storm is presented in order to create a sense of the supernatural, a device borrowed by the stage from the practices of the exorcists, whereas every thing is determined by the human interrelationships.

In fact, a more exact reading of the play comes out when it is viewed under the light thrown by the later group of critics. In the discussion above, an attempt has been made to see how the material factors seem to have made possible the alignment and realignment, adjustments and readjustments between the characters. Lear himself presents the best example. He discards Cordelia and then gets reconciled with her. Similarly, Gloucester, after rejecting Edgar, gets reunited with him. On the other hand, Goneril and Regan, initially a pair of Pelican birds, get away from each other on the question of love (or lust) for Edmund, the evil incarnate. Albany, however, stands out as a virtuous character against the immense cruelty of his wife.

## Macbeth

Of the four great tragedies *Macbeth* is the shortest, but in a way the most intense. It deals with the psychology of a murderer. Macbeth, an able general of Scotland secretly desires to become the King of that land. After a great victory in a war, the opportunity presents itself to him when King Duncan decides to stay overnight in his castle. Macbeth, in the meantime, on his way back home from the warfront, is accosted by a group of witches who tells him that he will become the King though Banquo's sons will inherit the throne after him. The Witches' words fire his imagination and in the execution of his plan (that is to kill the King, who is also his relative) his wife, Lady Macbeth, proves to be a great help, as she argues very strongly in favour of the killing, making Macbeth, in spite of his initial hesitation, perform the regicide. The play dramatises Macbeth's traumatic experiences till his death in the hands of Macduff. What issues forth through Macbeth's sufferings are questions of universal significance. Why does one want to kill? Out of envy, greed, or revenge? Macbeth kills Duncan out of greed. Greed for the great (greatest) place in the Kingdom. The play has this simplest of morals: greed leads to sin, and sin to death, but what highlights the play is the emphasis Shakespeare has put on the process of Macbeth's changing status from a promising general into a killer, while preserving our sympathy for him. Our focus will be on that part of the process which involves the psychology of Macbeth to be laid out in his asides and soliloquies.

In the Introduction we have discussed the nature and scope of the soliloquy. Here we shall give a brief idea of which asides and soliloquies we are going to discuss. In the play, Macbeth speaks five soliloquies and Lady Macbeth two proper, while her speech in the sleepwalking scene (5.1) cannot be considered, as Arnold argues, a soliloquy proper as she is not aware of what she is uttering.[1] Macbeth's soliloquies have the following sequence: 1.7.1-28; 2.1.33-64; 3.1.49-73; 3.2.47-55 and 5.5.16-27. And Lady Macbeth's soliloquies appear in 1.5.14-29; 1.5.37-53 and 5.1. Besides, Macbeth utters many asides (1.3.115-6; 1.3.126-41; 1.3.142-3; 1.3.145-6; 1.4.48-53 and 4.1. 161-71) of which we

[1] Morris LeRoy Arnold, *The Soliloquies of Shakespeare: A Study in Technic* (New York, The Columbia University Press, 1911), p. 75.

shall discuss the second one (1.3.126-41) as it very closely anticipates Macbeth's First Soliloquy. It is more functionally integrated with the psychic condition of the protagonist than with the stage device, the usual scope for an aside. Both Macduff and Banquo have one soliloquy each. Macduff's soliloquy (2.3.73-80) contains the horrible announcement of Duncan's death, and Banquo's (3.1.1-10) occurs when he ponders over the predictions of the Witches.

We will now first discuss the aside (1.3.126-41), then Lady Macbeth's soliloquies and finally those by Macbeth.

Macbeth's aside:

> ... Two truths are told
> As happy prologues to the swelling act
> Of the imperial theme....
> This supernatural soliciting
> Cannot be ill, cannot be good. If ill,
> Why hath it given me earnest of success
> Commencing in a truth? I am Thane of Cawdor.
> If good, why do I yield to that suggestion
> Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair
> And make my seated heart knock at my ribs
> Against the use of nature? Present fears
> Are less than horrible imaginings.
> My thought, whose murder yet is but fantastical,
> Shakes so my single state of man that function
> Is smothered in surmise, and nothing

But what is not. (1.3.126-41)[2]

This aside in the beginning presents a partially contented Macbeth as two-thirds of the Witches' prophecies are fulfilled. Only that part of the prophecies remains to be realised which is the "imperial theme". This contentment is short-lived as the rest of the speech finds Macbeth caught up in one of Shakespeare's common themes: the discrepancy between appearance and reality. Macbeth finds himself in a terrible confusion about the existence of the Witches: they were 'fantastical' (1.3.51), 'imperfect' (1.3.68), and 'seemed corporal' (1.3.79), and 'Melted as breath into the wind' (1.3.80). This reiterates his comment on the confused state of weather on his first arrival: "So foul and fair a day I have not seen" (1.3.36). 'Fair' and 'foul' are two opposite qualities, and the Witches can be representatives of either of the two: "This supernatural soliciting Cannot be ill, cannot be good" (1,3,129-0). Which one are they representatives of? For a moment, his mind wavers between what is ill and what is good. It reminds us of Hamlet pondering over his uncertainties regarding the Ghost: "The spirit that I have seen \ May be a devil" (2.2.595-6).[3] Hamlet, unlike Macbeth, waits for "grounds" (2.2.596), that is, proofs, to see that the Ghost is not false.

Macbeth, on the other hand, being unconscious of the direction his mind is taking, is confusing the moral terms. And, his words "nothing is / But what is not" (1.3.140-1) through which, as Knight notes, "Reality and unreality change places,"[4] introduce the great series of equivocations and ambiguities that generally identify Macbeth, and that are expressed through other devices like the Witches, whose gender identity is equally questionable - they look like women, but they have beard. The words also indicate the material base which is destroyed by the contradictions between political expediency and

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[2] *Macbeth* in *The Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works*. General Editors: Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1988, 1994).

[3] *Hamlet* in *The Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works*. General Editors: Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1988, 1994).

[4] Kenneth Muir, ed. *Macbeth*, (The Arden Shakespeare, Methuen, rpt. 1976). Knight is quoted in a footnote on page 141.

That is, this time he thinks of doing something consciously to achieve his goal. At this point he is considering an action which takes him beyond the purview of the prophecies and settles him onto a plane where it is not absurd for a military general to conceive taking action to usurp a king. This 'aside' therefore is very subtle in the sense that Macbeth is beginning to take responsibility for a future action, and thus will become able to identify himself with a purpose originally discussed between him and his wife,[8] and now insinuated by non-human agents, the Witches. In the process, he is not aware about the reversal of moral values he has made. He questions, "If ill", and actually it is ill to think that witches can ever tell a truth. Similarly, his asking, "If good" transposes the basic idea that it is good to be shaken by the thought of murder. Thus the Witches are ill because they, as the first two prophecies are fulfilled, have instigated Macbeth onto a killing, and are good because the thought of killing has unfixed his hair. But Macbeth thinks otherwise, in his logic what should be deemed as ill is good, and good ill. This 'aside' is thus very revealing in clearly placing the switch in Macbeth's mind in the most dramatic terms. It is the starting point to see Macbeth not only as capable of killing enemies but also of murdering his own King, his greatest ally.

Now, to come back to the passage, Macbeth feels that what he is going to do is more terrible than his 'present fears' (136) about the Witches' prophecies. The thought of murder is yet only in imagination, but it raises his hair as if with life of its own. The thought of the murder, that is 'function' (139) is 'smothered in surmise' (140), which should mean the execution of murder is buried in the very conception of it, much like, though in a different sense, Hamlet's complaint: "...thus the native hue of resolution \ Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought" (3.1.86-7). The difference is that while it bothers Hamlet to know that his deliberations about the murder are actually preventing him from doing the act itself, Macbeth by internally visualising it (the murder) feels as

[8] In Act 1 Scene 1, Macbeth starts at the Witches at which Banquo says, "Good sir, why do you start and seem to fear / Things that do sound so fair?" (1.49-50) on which Foakes comments that "It seems plain that he has thought of such a possibility before meeting the witches, or at least that his starting at their greetings of him registers his awareness at this moment that what they say gives conscious expression to a half-formed image; and this is confirmed by the first scene in which Lady Macbeth appears, for the death of Duncan is already an idea familiar to her, even to the murder weapon, the 'keen knife' that is to do the deed" (1.5.51). Foakes in *Focus*, p. 11.

though it had already taken place. And, 'nothing is / But what is not' suggests that except for the murder nothing is real. That is, he has to get possessed with the idea of murder in the same scale as Hamlet resolves regarding his acceptance of the Ghost's command: "And thy commandment *all alone* [italics added] shall live \ Within the book and volume of my brain" (1.5.102-3). Both of them are to commit homicide, but Hamlet's is an act of revenge which he feels, at least initially, is imposed upon him, whereas Macbeth's is an act of murder the impulse of which is emerging from within himself, for which he cannot but be possessed with the idea of murder. Under the murderer's vision the implications of the words ('Nothing is . . .') change. In fact, his two promotions have come so fast that the 'swelling act' beckons him much sooner than expected. So, he goes through, as Robin Grove has pointed out, an identity-crisis: who is he? Glamis, Cawdor or King Macbeth?

> Macbeth's struggle is not with his conscience, but with himself in a different sense: his identity: who he is; and he is the man who is Glamis, and Cawdor, and will be what he is promised, King. All three identities are true, and the swelling act of the imperial theme has thus begun inside him.[9]

The image of the imperial theme and the way to grab it stir Macbeth's imagination along with the realisation that the killing he is contemplating now is different from the killing he has so far been wont to do. The speech, as Foakes comments, " records Macbeth's horror at, and fascination with, a new vision of death - not the brutal and casual slaughter of the battlefield, but the calculated murder of a king."[10] He, however, ends the 'aside' with the hope that he will be able to achieve kingship "without my stir" (1.3.143) which opens the scope for his wife to play her role in order to stir him into action.

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[9] Robin Grove, " 'Multiplying villainies of nature'" in *Focus*, pp. 125-6.
[10] R. A. Foakes, "Images of death: ambition in *Macbeth*", in *Focus*, p. 13.

As in *Othello*, so is in *Macbeth* that the first few soliloquies are uttered not by the protagonist of the play but by the second important character. Hence in *Othello* it is Iago who speaks the first soliloquy, and in *Macbeth* it is Lady Macbeth whom we first meet as she delivers the first soliloquy: 1.4.14-57. Since this soliloquy runs with a break in the middle when her servant comes to inform her about the arrival of Duncan, the question may arise whether this speech can be considered as one soliloquy or two. Her conversation with the servant spreads over eight lines (30-7), apparently causing no definite change in her line of thought, because while she speaks about Macbeth's inherent weakness in the first part of the soliloquy (14-29), she decides to take up herself the duty of doing the cruel act in the second part. As such her brooding temperament does not change, neither does she slacken in her stern attitude which is built upon the painful ignorance of the merit of human life. This, therefore, looks like a bifurcated soliloquy. On the other hand, however, the second part makes a departure from the first part in its sheer incantational power vivified not only by her willingness to unsex herself, nor by the invoking of the knife, but also by having her perverted psyche revealed anticipating the eerie image of herself dashing the brain of a suckling baby (1.7.54-58). The urgency of the tone in the second part of the speech is caused by the news of the King's imminent arrival. Whatever has to be done must be done fast. In spite of this, the second part of the soliloquy seems to be flowing out naturally from the first part, and, therefore, we would like to consider this as one soliloquy rather than two.

The first part of the soliloquy:

> Glamis thou art, and Cawdor, and shalt be
> What thou art promised. Yet do I fear thy nature.
> It is too full o'th milk of human kindness
> To catch the nearest way. Thou wouldst be great,
> Art not without ambition, but without
> The illness should attend it. What thou wouldst highly
> That wouldst thou holily; wouldst not play false,

> And yet wouldst wrongly win. Thou'dst have, great Glamis,
> That which cries 'Thus thou must do' if thou have it,
> And that which rather thou dost fear to do
> Then wishest should be undone. 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
> Which fate and metaphysical aid doth seem
> To have thee crowned withal. (1.5.14-29)

In this part of the soliloquy, we find a first-hand portrayal of their conjugal life, she being thoroughly aware of her husband's deficiencies, his lacking in courage apparently in acts of cruelty, and his having a hypocritical element in his character. She criticises his opportunism accusing him that he is ready to eat the fish, but won't do anything to catch it. She also emphasises that if she had a plan like Macbeth, she would at once go for realising it. Macbeth is behaving as Pompey does in *Antony and Cleopatra* (2.7). Pompey does not take Menas's suggestion that he kill his enemies while hosting them at a dinner on his boat, but replies that he would have agreed to that if Menas had done the killing and reported to him afterwards. Now, being suggested he would not agree because he cannot betray his guests. Pompey is unwilling to commit an act of betrayal against the people he is playing host to, whereas Macbeth will be seen committing it. Lady Macbeth knows that Macbeth does not want to take the risk involved in such an action (the killing), but is keen on having the benefit out of it. So she needs to persuade him into taking action. Thus, Lady Macbeth overdoes herself in order to instigate her husband into undertaking the action. She has to do it as she fears that Macbeth is naturally disinclined to cruelty: "Yet do I fear thy nature: / It is too full o'th'milk of human kindness, / To catch the nearest way" (1.5.15-17). "Lady Macbeth," as Muir states, "implies that her husband is squeamish and sentimental. She may also imply that he is bound by traditional

feelings."[11] But the irony entailed in this cannot be missed because, as Clemen notes, what she 'disparagingly' hates to be the defect in Macbeth is the very virtue which can draw us to him: "...this fundamental human quality prevents us from regarding him from the beginning as a cold villain incapable of compassion."[12] Lady Macbeth is then only eagerly waiting for her husband's arrival. She is sure that she will be able to motivate him:

> 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. . . (1.5.24-27)

Then the messenger comes and intervenes in her speech. As he leaves after giving the news of Duncan's arrival in the castle, she continues soliloquising.

If the first part of the soliloquy (14-29) is accusative, the second part (37-53) is persuasive.

> . . . The raven himself is hoarse
> That croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan
> Under my battlements. Come, you spirits
> And fill me from the crown to the toe top-full
> Of direst cruelty. Make thick my blood,
> Stop up th'access and passage to remorse,
> That no compunctious visitings of nature
> Shake my fell purpose, nor keep peace between

[11] Kenneth Muir, ed. *Macbeth* (Methuen, London, rpt., 1976), p. 27n.

[12] Wolfgang Clemen, *Shakespeare's Soliloquies*, (Methuen & Co., 1987), p. 145.

Th'effect and it. Come to my woman's breasts,
And take my milk for gall, you murd'ring ministers,
Wherever in your sightless substances
You wait on nature's mischief. Come, thick night,
And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell,
That my keen knife see not the wound it makes,
Nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark
To cry 'Hold, hold!' (1.5.37-53)

The speech is rich in imagery, effective in persuasion, and tremendous in energy. She first thinks of the raven which should make its voice hoarse in announcing the arrival of Duncan. The arrival of an ordinary guest, as Manly says, 'might be announced by a magpie, but for such a visit as Duncan's the hoarse croaking of a raven would alone be appropriate.'[13] However, unknowingly to herself, the bird's hoarse croaking arouses an unpleasant feeling in us, and thus we are prepared to receive more unsavoury speech from Lady Macbeth. So, when she next says, "unsex me here," we understand that she will go all out to attain the throne for her husband. She asks her blood to thicken - almost the utmost profanity in the Elizabethan context, because it is this congealing of blood that first awakens Dr Faustus to an inner resistance toward his signing of the contract with Mephistopheles. Whereas Dr Faustus balks at the idea even momentarily, Lady Macbeth is asking for it. Realising that committing murder is a merciless job, she demands to have the door to pity closed. Her breasts which are supposed to lactate for the baby are now wished to have their milk turned into gall, an image she can conceive probably because she is childless. In fact much of what she says here is ironical because her notion of cruelty asks for crushing the affection for children, which will prove opposite to Macbeth's very craving for children.

[13] Muir, p. 29n.

Then she says:

> Come, thick night,
> And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell,
> That my keen knife see not the wound it makes,
> Nor heaven peep through the blanket of the day,
> To cry 'Hold!' (1.5.49-53)

The passage primarily suggests the macabre nightly atmosphere that needed to be created in the imagination of the original audience who watched the play at daylight.[14] Brooks suggests that the 'keen knife' may be regarded as Macbeth himself. And, this keen knife needs a darker night so that it cannot see what it is accomplishing: "For night must not only screen the deed from the eye of heaven - conceal it at least until it is too late for heaven to call out to Macbeth 'Hold, Hold!' Lady Macbeth would have night blanket the deed from the hesitant doer."[15] Apart from the knife image the blanket image has also drawn the notice of the critics. Johnson is said not to have liked the word ('an epithet now seldom heard but in the stable', *The Rambler*, no. 168), but Clemen argues that "the invocation is made particularly effective by the use of such everyday words which give unfamiliar horror a tangible quality."[16] And, Brooks prefers to consider both 'blanket' and 'pall' as clothes imagery, one as the 'clothing of sleep' and the other as the 'clothing of death', both generally aggravating the image of the nightly atmosphere.[17] It is also obvious that the word was prompted to Shakespeare by the fact that the Elizabethan dramatists used the 'blanket' as a stage prop to signify night: "When tragedies were represented, the stage was hung with black."[18] The word, as Muir suggests

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[14] Though, *Macbeth* was also acted at the Blackfriars, a covered auditorium.
[15] Cleanth Brooks, "The Naked Babe and the Cloak of Manliness" (1947) in John Wain, ed. *Macbeth* (MacMillan, Rpt. 1975), p. 190.
[16] Clemen, p. 148.
[17] Wain, p. 190.
[18] Muir, p.31n.

metaphorically refers to 'the blanket spread by the dark over the earth'.[19] Similarly, the words *pall, hell, knife* and *dark* have frequently appeared in Elizabethan plays in connection with the stage, so they were naturally associated in Shakespeare's mind.[20] The passage shows Lady Macbeth's singular familiarity with the atmosphere of night, and not strangely while Macbeth will ponder the scheme of killing Banquo he will speak almost in the same terminology, as if both husband and wife were a pair of nightly beings:

> ..... Come, seeling night,
> Scarf up the tender eye of pitiful day,
> And with the 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.' rookie wood.
> Good things of day begin to droop and drowse,
> Whilst night's black agents to their preys do rouse. (3.2.47-54)

Phrases like "Come, seeling night," "Light thickens" should help the audience to visualise the nightly atmosphere. In an earlier scene, Ross says, "By th'clock 'tis day, / And yet dark night strangles the travelling lamp" (2.3.6-7). However, the knowledge of the stage fact does not lighten but rather adds to the grim implications of the horrifying nature of murder evoked in the speeches made by both of them.

The speech (1.5.38-53) has provoked a series of commentaries about the role of Lady Macbeth, especially in relation to her persuading her husband, Macbeth, to the killing. The question that has split the house is whether Macbeth would have committed the

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[19] Muir, p.31n.
[20] Muir quotes Whiter, *Specimen of Commentary*, 1794, pp.153-84; p.31n.

crime if he had not been pursued by Lady Macbeth. Critics have taken her to task from equating her with the Witches to accusing her for violation of the gender roles, and, except for Bradley and Moulton, have considered her unnatural.[21] Arnold has categorised her as belonging partially to the type of she-villain, like Regan in the old *Leir*.[22] Most of the recent arguments, however, as we will show, have centred around the gender question. Critics have effectively argued from a bi-polar premise either castigating her or in defence of her, bringing to the fore the seminal aspects of gender criticism concerning patriarchal and matriarchal values. One critical line also considers her behaviour to be rooted in suppressed sexuality, while another calls her a Witch on the basis of her natural ability to invoke the supernatural agents. Noting her speech for its potential to offer wrong signals about her true nature, Bradley says that Lady Macbeth is so persuasive, because she, being aware of her husband's natural weakness of character, has to overact. From this point of view her unusual utterances about changing her sex and filling herself up with cruelty, and, later on, in her conversation with Macbeth, her desire to dash the brains out of the new born baby (1.7.51-9), all suggest that she is consciously acting out

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[21] Marylin French, "The Late Tragedies," in John Drakakis, ed. *Shakespearean Tragedy*, (Longman, 1992), pp. 227-79. French sums up all the negative reactions to Lady Macbeth in a footnote which we quote: "Many of Shakespeare's readers share this dual standard. From Dr Johnson on, they have used different criteria and different language in discussing Lady Macbeth and Macbeth (Bradley and Moulton are notable exceptions), and the word most frequently used for the lady is *unnatural*. Macbeth is a good man gone wrong; he is judged ethically. Lady Macbeth violates 'nature', and is judged mythically. Smith, *Dualities*, p. 172, writes that Lady Macbeth reverses the roles 'appropriate to husband and wife, to say nothing of violating her *natural feminine attributes of tenderness and timidity*'. Terence Eagleton, *Shakespeare and Society* (New York, 1967), p. 133n, claims Lady Macbeth desires to be transformed into a woman whose desires as well as actions are *unnatural*. Proser, *Heroic Image*, p.60, asserts that in Lady Macbeth, 'womanliness, *normally tender, apprehensive, and compassionate*, transforms itself into a cruelty that denies its *usual* characteristics'. [All italics French's.] Franklin Dickey finds Lady Macbeth more of a villain than her husband, for reasons that remain murky to me. *Not Wisely But Too Well* (San Marino, Califf., 1957), p. 18. A fascinating, unconscious statement of dual standards of judgment occurs in Francis Fergusson, *The Human Image in Dramatic Literature* (Garden City, N Y, 1957), p. 120: ' Lady Macbeth fears her husband's *human* nature, as well as her own *female* nature.' [Italics French's.]

"Alex Aronson, analysing the play for Jungian symbols in *Psyche and Symbol in Shakespeare* (Bloomington, Ind., 1972), p. 237, calls Lady Macbeth 'serpentinelike', and relates her to Hecate, who is 'emasculating, bewitching, deadly, and stupefying'. He argues further that in myth the male is seen as the bringer of light, form, and order: 'Both in the prehistoric myth and in Shakespeare's tragedies, the symbolism points clearly enough to the victory of the masculine , conscious spirit over the powers of the matriarchate' which are associated with darkness and chaos (p. 256). But the mythic symbology Aronson describes is in direct contradiction to the symbology of *Macbeth*, in which 'feminine' symbols are aligned with concord, order, love, and trust." 47n, p. 278.

[22] Arnold, pp. 63-4.

the part of an over-cruel woman. Bradley therefore proposes that she should be taken for what she does not say rather than what she says:

> Yet if the Lady Macbeth of these scenes were really utterly inhuman, or a 'fiend-like queen', as Malcolm calls her, the Lady Macbeth of the sleep-walking scene would be an impossibility. The one woman could never become the other woman. And in fact, if we look below the surface, there is evidence enough in the earlier scenes of preparation for the later.[23]

Opposed to it, Stewart suggests that Lady Macbeth's speech should not be taken as wholly attempting to cover Macbeth's deficiencies, rather she reveals certain characteristics which present a terrible image of herself:

> The speech will be satisfactory if we only admit that the portrayal of Lady Macbeth, and of her relations with her husband, are factors in it; and that a certain distortion of Macbeth's character is entailed in this. On Macbeth himself the speech does indeed throw new and useful light, such as is desirable in an exposition, for we chiefly gather from it that he is not likely to be immediately wholehearted in villainy and that some spiritual struggle is to be expected of him. But the speech is also charged with certain feelings of Lady Macbeth's which lead her to exaggerate what she pervertedly regards as her husband's insufficiencies, and this renders more striking and terrible our first impression of her.[24]

Regarding her culpability, the view forwarded is that since she has taken herself to instigate Macbeth to kill instead of preventing him as a responsible wife should do, she

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[23] Bradley, A.C., *Shakespearean Tragedy* (MacMillan, rpt., 1971), p.309.

[24] Stewart, *M.L.R.*, 1945, p.173. Quoted by Kenneth Muir in his Arden edition of *Macbeth* (Methuen, London, rpt., 1976), p. 27n.

then has violated the norms of society, and as long as she is living under a male-dominated society, she will have to undergo punishment. Besides, Lady Macbeth's mood is, as Hawkins says, indicative of "the dangers of wifely domination and uxoriousness and the hollowness of childlessness."[25] In his interview with John Brown Russell, Peter Hall clearly states that "Without Lady Macbeth, I don't believe he would have done the murder."[26] Even Marylin French, though a great sympathiser of Lady Macbeth, agrees that given the hesitation Macbeth shows it is clear that "he could easily be dissuaded from killing Duncan, ...[and by] Shakespeare's division of experience, it is Lady Macbeth's function so to dissuade him."[27]

Her asking for a reversal of the sexual role has been noted for its double-edged expression, indicating, as Robin Grove has forwarded this useful idea, that she is also craving to fulfil her sexual urge through this speech:

> For what she is demanding is that her instincts be outraged and gratified both at once, and the strangest thing about the speech is that it turns her yearning to be un-sexed into a triumphant sexual outcry. In the thrusting movement of the lines, the repeated 'Come ... come', the blatant 'fill me ... top-full ...Stop up ... the passage to remorse', sensual proclivities are fulfilled, reaching to a spasm of pleasure in the climax, 'Hold, hold'.[28]

On the other hand it does offend, as Tennenhouse suggests, the patriarchal values which care not for an individual but for a lineage. If Macbeth is allowed to become the king, his having no children would mean a cessation of the royal lineage. So, according to Tennenhouse, the patriarchal values must dominate over the maternal values, and Lady

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[25] Michael Hawkins, "History, politics and *Macbeth*," in *Focus*, p. 164.
[26] Peter Hall, in *Focus*, pp. 236-7.
[27] French, "The Late Tragedies," in Drakakis, ed. *Shakespearean Tragedy*, p.266.
[28] Grove, in *Focus*, p. 131.

Macbeth must be punished for violating the norms. That is why she is shown as weakened and punished, and finally giving in to the male principle.[29] To undergo this wishful metamorphosis she seeks the help of spirits which to us appear to be the same set of witches that encountered Macbeth on the heath. Here, again, the status of Lady Macbeth does change, much in the same way as Macbeth's did in the process of delivering the 'aside' discussed above. Both of them seem to have shared their faith in the supernatural agents, particularly the evil ones, and their potential. Her desire to change her sex may raise one or two points about their connubial life. We note that she is childless as Macduff tells us: "He has no children" (4.3.216). We are familiar with Shakespeare's way of suggesting the practise of transvestism as a popular pastime between couples. Cleopatra refers to their transvestite behaviour in *Antony and Cleopatra*: "I drunk him to his bed, / Then put my tires and mantles on him whilst / I wore his sword Philippan" (2.5.21-3).[30] It may therefore point to Macbeth's failure in bed, or to her unsatisfied urge - and by trying to change her role she wants to have what Macbeth is wanting. This may indicate the beginning on her part of a craving for a compensatory satisfaction to substitute for a biological need. She might like to see her husband as the King while he may have still failed her in bed. The idea then takes on a very complicated turn, because, finding that her husband has deficiency, she does not only abandon the wife's traditional role, but also wants to act like a man, a man capable of fertilising a woman, and in doing so, from what notion we cannot tell, she also attaches an aspect as belonging solely to man : cruelty. Why? A woman can be as cruel as a man, and can also ask for the "direst cruelty" (1.5.42). But, as she thinks that she has to be cruel, and since only a man can be cruel in her opinion, so she needs to change her sex, which means she has to be unnatural, and she can be only that by seeking the help of

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[29] Tennenhouse, *Power on Display: The Politics of Shakespeare's Genres (Methuen, New York & London, 1986)*, pp. 128-9.

[30] *Antony and Cleopatra* was written immediately after *Macbeth*, so they can be paired, and as such are dominated by the idea of the woman dominating over the man partner. In fact, certain imagery in *A & C* drawn from the world of aviary suggesting the change of gender roles cannot but be remembered: "...Antony, / Claps on his sea-wing, and (like a doting mallard) / Leaving the fight in heighth, flies after her: I never saw an action of such shame, / Experience, manhood, honour, ne'er before / Did violate so itself" (3.10.18-23); and, "To be furious / Is to be frighted out of fear, and in that mood / The dove will peck the estridge" (3.13.197-9).

the infernal "murd'ring ministers" (1.5.47). So, both her and Macbeth's aims converge in that Macbeth decides to consort with the Witches, and she with the supernatural agents. At the same time, her incantations, "Come, you spirits" (1.5.39), "Come to my woman's breasts" (1.5.46),and finally, "Come,thick night..." (1.5.49), all beginning with, "Come," are significant, as Clemen notes, on two counts: she is to be believed as being capable of calling diabolical forces at her beck and call, and she is ready to dispense with pity and remorse:

> . . . they enable us to see that the inner transformation which Lady Macbeth has resolved to undergo cannot take place without the assistance of diabolical spirits. For the Elizabethan audience these proclamations were not mere rhetoric, but an actual conjuration of the infernal powers with whom Lady Macbeth is proposing to conclude a pact. Pity and remorse, two primal forces in mankind, must be eliminated so that Lady Macbeth may perpetrate evil with unchecked cruelty.[31]

But the idea cannot be ignored that she perceives she won't withstand seeing the blood herself. Thus the second part of the soliloquy is noteworthy both as it fulfils the stage need of visualising the horror of the murder to intimidate the imagination of the audience and as it reveals to us that she is going to undertake a project in executing which she does not have the required strength of mind. This anticipated failure determines, to take the cue from Tennenhouse, the punishment that Lady Macbeth must receive as she has violated the norms of the society. Hawkins, explaining the role of Lady Macbeth, says that "Macbeth not only murders his kinsman, he allows his household to be subverted by, in Hoilnshed's words, a 'very ambitious' woman ... and he

[31] Clemen, p.147.

fails to perpetuate his line."[32] As Tennenhouse suggests that in order to restore the norms Lady Macbeth's role has been gradually weakened through her not being allowed to host the all-important banquet, Hawkins also implies that Lady Macbeth's dominant role will not be allowed to continue for long:

> Of course the role of the dominant woman - an offence to decorum like Lady Macbeth's claim that she wishes to be unsexed - cannot be sustained: from the moment of her failure to murder Duncan herself (on kinship ground), Lady Macbeth gradually plays a less significant role and is progressively excluded from her husband's counsels.[33]

We also see the loosening of her dominance in 3.2., as when Banquo comes up in their conversation as the possible enemy in their peaceful way to the throne, Lady Macbeth almost innocently asks, "What's to be done?" (3.2.45), to which Macbeth replies "Be innocent of the knowledge, dearest chuck, / Till thou applaud the deed" (3.2.46-7), thus keeping Lady Macbeth ignorant about the murder-plan of Banquo. The roles by now have reversed.

French, however, points to the relatively harsh treatment Lady Macbeth is doled out. She argues the case from a feminist perspective and brings out the fact that Lady Macbeth unjustifiably draws more acrimonious comments for a crime which she has not committed herself. She further suggests that as Shakespeare worked within the given gender paradigm, his distribution of moral roles between man and woman does accordingly vary. Despite the fact that Lady Macbeth, in supporting the cause of Macbeth, as Bradley suggests, has done a wifely job, yet she is judged differently from her husband. While Macbeth is called a 'butcher', 'traitor', and 'slave', she is called

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[32] Hawkins, *Focus*, p.164.
[33] Hawkins, pp. 164-5.

'fiend-like' and is "seen as supernaturally evil."[34] She is shown to have failed in performing herself in the feminine role assigned to her by a patriarchal society. So, French complains: "In Shakespeare's eyes, Macbeth has violated moral law; Lady Macbeth has violated natural law."[35]

French's compassionate view brings to the fore how she should then be viewed in her relation with the supernatural agents! Is she the Fourth Witch or not? In the light of what she will utter about dashing the brains of a suckling baby, the logic in the question raised by Knights in his famous essay, "How many children had Lady Macbeth?" does not seem to be irrelevant. Though she says she has "given suck" (1.7.54) to babies, we have no reference of her children as we have of Duncan, Bunquo and Macduff's. Therefore her speech falsifies her motherhood, and strengthens the view that she is sterile and, because of it, can draw on an unnatural mother image. Peter Stallybrass thus thinks that she should be linked up with the unholy family of the Witches.[36] If Lady Macbeth is deemed as having replaced the Witches then we have to bear in mind that the Witches' gender identity remains vague. They are, as French notes, "female, but have beards."[37] And, after meeting with them Macbeth becomes indeterminate in his manners and morally ambiguous. Now Lady Macbeth is asking for unsexing herself which, in addition to her desire to stop the 'compunctious visitings of Nature', and the 'milk' of 'woman's breasts' (1.5.41-5) is thought of not only as denying herself the role of woman but also as challenging the patriarchal hierarchy. But these very functions are present in her because she is a woman, whereas the Witches are difficult to categorise. Thus Lady Macbeth by the structure of the play may be considered as yet another witch, or as the Fourth Witch, but psychologically speaking, she remains different from them, though, as Stallybrass suggests, her utterances undermine the male authority:

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[34] French, p. 266.
[35] French, p. 266.
[36] Peter Stallybrass, " Macbeth and witchcraft," in *Focus*, p. 198.
[37] French, "The Late Tragedies," p. 264.

> Nevertheless, Lady Macbeth's invocation of the 'murd'ring ministers' (1.5.45) as her children has particular resonance within the context of witchcraft, even if her ministers never appear. For her proclaimed as mother / lover of the spirits implicitly subverts patriarchal authority in a manner typically connected with witchcraft. If the first Witch plans to come between a sailor and his wife in 1.3, Lady Macbeth herself breaks the bond with her husband by suggesting both his metaphysical and physical impotence (he is not 'a man' [1.7.49]) because he is unworthy of the respect due to a patriarch, because he is 'a coward' (1.7.43), and, possibly, because as we learn later, his is 'a barren sceptre' (3.1.61). It is particularly ironic, then, that Macbeth says 'Bring forth men-children only' (1.7.72). For the structural antithesis which the first act develops establishes the relation between women, witchcraft, the undermining of patriarchal authority and sterility. [38]

About this soliloquy, Derek Russell Davis's comment is conclusive:

> The Witches' promise of greatness conveyed to her in his letter causes her to review the assumptions on which their marriage is based, and she decides to 'pour ... spirits' in his ear and to 'chastise' with her tongue all that impedes him (1.5.24-7). Learning of Duncan's visit that night, she resolves to deny her womanly feelings, to dedicate herself to the direst cruelty and to stop up the access and passage to remorse. She thus recognises that a great effort is needed

[38] Peter Stallbrass, "*Macbeth* and witchcraft," in *Focus*, p. 197.

> on her part to compensate for the human kindness and lack of resolution she discerns in him. She does not lack the 'compunctious visitings of nature', although she intends to override them. What she is to do will be possible only if it is hidden by thick night and dunnest smoke of hell so that she does not see the wound her keen knife makes. The situation demands ruthlessness.[39]

Thus, what stands out about her character is that she has, in spite of her failure as a responsible wife, shown her strength only in words, but not in deed. It is she who asks her husband "to look like the innocent flower / But be the serpent under't" (1.5.64-5), it is she again who asks her husband to thrust "this night's great business into my dispatch" (1.5.67), because Duncan "Must be provided for" (1.5.66). Unlike Macbeth she blatantly packs all thoughts by saying that the murder ('the great business') will "Give [them] solely sovereign sway and masterdom" (1.5.69) and leaves the stage by saying "Leave all the rest to me" (1.5.72). "To her," as Bradley says, "there is no separation between will and deed."[40] In order to make it obvious that she is less resolute than she appears to be we have enough evidence in the play which has already been well-pointed out by critics throughout the ages.

Her failure number one is when she says she would have killed Duncan if he had not resembled her father: "Had he not resembled / My father as he slept, I had done't" (2.2.12-3). Two is when she seems to be out of her wits regarding managing the Banquo problem. Macbeth is in command there, and announces, "there shall be done / A deed of dreadful note," to which she inquires, "What's to be done?" (3.2.44-5), thus expressing her helplessness. Three is her complete mental break-down as shown through the Sleepwalking Scene (5.1). Though her utterances here do not constitute a soliloquy as

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[39] Derek Russell Davis, "Hurt Minds", in *Focus*, p. 213.

[40] Bradley, *Tragedy*, (MacMillan), p. 307.

she is not aware of what she is doing or saying[41], it is the scene where she is paid back in full for her extremely abstuse unfeeling in the scene after Macbeth murdered Duncan: (2.2). "Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood / Clean from my hand?" asks Macbeth, and she replies, "A little water clears us of this deed" (2.2.58-9 & 65). Perhaps the most obdurate expression is that of her plucking the nipple from the boneless gums of the child as well as dashing his brains out (1.7.57-8). Coleridge's defence of her on this point foreshadows Bradley's as he thinks that Lady Macbeth would not have uttered it if she had meant it. She only wants to prove to Macbeth that if she had taken an oath she would not have violated it at any cost, even if that meant the killing of her own child. He thinks that Lady Macbeth refers to the suckling baby because "she considered no tie so tender as that which connected her with her babe."[42] Though she can be viewed as combining many prototypical aspects, she remains a woman completely given up to the betterment of the career of her own husband, ignoring in the process to respond to her own conscience. Her two soliloquies which have been taken up for discussion here unfold only the cruel side of her character, while the drama in the process proves that she is not what the soliloquies expose her to be. In this respect the soliloquies therefore attempt at providing not a veracious image of her character. It is further interesting to note that it will be wrong to hold an idea that the soliloquies are always supposed to give us the true and veracious report of the characters. In *Hamlet*, for example, a couple of the soliloquies do not give true guidance to Hamlet's inner self, they rather appear to deceive us away from him. Soliloquies, therefore, are as apt to provide appearance as reality.

Then we arrive at Macbeth's first soliloquy (1.7.1-28), which is a deliberation on the consequences of regicide.[43] This soliloquy is delivered just at the moment when Lady Macbeth is busy receiving Duncan and his royal train (1.6), and Macbeth is left alone to himself in consequence of Macbeth's words with his wife in 1.5. Lady Macbeth has assumed the caretaking of Duncan, while Macbeth is let alone to plan his murderous act.

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[41] Lady Macbeth's utterances in the Sleepwalking Scene do not constitute a soliloquy as she is not conscious of what she is saying or doing. See Arnold, p. 75.

[42] See Muir, p. 42n.

[43] See Brian Morris holding the same view in his essay, "The kingdom, the power and the glory in *Macbeth*," in *Focus*, p. 43.

In reception of the King stirring activities are going on all around, and Macbeth seems to be making this speech while watching over this preparation from an upper platform. And the night-time, as Clemen argues, makes it a perfect setting for a brooding Macbeth to utter his soliloquy.[44] The soliloquy also underlines that Macbeth is different from how his wife prefers to understand him. His conscience which for Lady Macbeth is mere lack of courage now confronts him, and to show that the soliloquy is in order.

If it were done when it's 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. 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-tongued against
The deep damnation of his taking-off ,

[44] Clemen, p. 180.

And pity, like a naked new-born babe,
Striding the blast, or heaven's cherubin, horsed
Upon the sightless couriers of the air,
Shall blow the horrid deed in every eye
That tears shall drown the wind. I have no spur
To prick the sides of my intent , but only

Vaulting ambition which o'erleaps itself

And falls on Th.' other. (1.7.1-28)

This first soliloquy by Macbeth has raised a number of critical issues which we will discuss in the following pages. Macbeth is pondering the consequences of the possible murder of Duncan. And he balks at the idea. Why does he do so? Is he hesitating because he is afraid of the consequences, or because his conscience is resisting him? Pertinent to this debate is the question relating to the possibility of reading Macbeth's character as being informed by the dialectic between Machiavelli and Hooker. An analysis of the feudal politics also shows Macbeth to be in a position to do the murder while fearing opposition from his allies. This line of thought views that his ambition is justified, though not without questions. The speech has also been taken as "a supreme example of his 'visual imagination'"[45], the climactic point of which is the naked-new-born-babe image on which critics have forwarded excellent interpretations.

This soliloquy is taking place when Macbeth's reputation has risen high, when the King has kindly consented to pay him a royal visit in honour of his service to the country. Nothing but bliss is supposed to prevail in Inverness. The castle is stirring with activities in preparation of the arrival of the royal guest. The banquet is getting ready. Against this atmosphere of "conviviality and hospitability," Macbeth appears alone on the stage

[45] Muir quotes Wilson, p. 36

deeply brooding about the insurmountable consequences he might face if the murder were done.[46]

Duncan, on his arrival at Macbeth's castle has already observed that "This castle hath a pleasant seat. The air / Nimbly and sweetly recommends itself / Unto our gentle senses" (1.6.1-3), thus punctuating the deeply ironic contrast that the present soliloquy embodies. In fact, it is noticeable that from the beginning Duncan's several acts of appreciating Macbeth are, in spite of himself, ironical. Duncan called Macbeth, "O worthiest cousin" (1.4.14), but Macbeth will prove to be otherwise. He further welcomes Macbeth with, "I have begun to plant thee, and will labour / To make thee full of growing" (1.4.28-9). Duncan's mention of Macbeth's love for him also smacks of irony: "his great love, sharp as his spur" (1.6.23) - and we know that Macbeth's sharp spur will cause him his life. Reporting on Cawdor's betrayal Malcolm says, he threw "away the dearest thing [both his Thaneship and life] he owed / As 'twere a careless trifle" (1.4.10-11). The irony is obvious: Macbeth, in his turn, will also betray. But the King's reply is more ironical: "There's no art / To find the mind's construction in the face" (1.4.11-2), anticipating the King's trust in Macbeth to be betrayed. Shakespeare's technique in preparing the audience for the future turn of events is matchless here. He arouses our perception about the direction of events without providing the obvious realistic links. For example, we do not establish any dramatic logic between the acts of betrayal of the two successive Cawdors, but our hunch is that the second is likely to follow the first.

And, as if to heighten the irony, Shakespeare begins the soliloquy with a conditional: "If it were done when it's done...." The first word, 'If', tells us of a hypothetical situation. If certain conditions are fulfilled, then Macbeth hopes to gain from the murderous act. But the conditional structure forces a discrepancy between what Macbeth wishes to have happened and how things will turn out to have gone the opposite way. Macbeth's desire to be the king is weighed against the disadvantages lying in his way to be so. Grammatically speaking, the conditional structure introduces a contrary-to-fact-statement. So, when Macbeth says that "If it were done.....done quickly," he actually

[46] Clemen, pp. 150 - 1.

wishes for a quick execution of his murderous thought, but the fact is that it would not be all that simple. The speech embodies, through the conditional structure, the conflict between Macbeth's desire and fulfilment. As he will contemplate further upon the murder of Duncan, he will get more nervous, and will dither about the prospects which will be shown by the 'dagger' soliloquy (2.1.33-61). He will be seen wavering between a visionary dagger and a real one - not only fulfilling the implications of the conditional structure of the present soliloquy, but also giving testimony to the confused state of his mind. Now, in his mind's eyes he can foresee the consequences, and yet he wants to trammel them up, and therein lies his tragedy. The conditional structure, therefore, highlights not his forcibly reaching at a decision, but rather the pain at the things he must forgo in order to achieve his goal.[47]

Presently, at line 2, Macbeth pronounces the word 'assassination' which removes our doubt as to whether the idea was discussed with his wife earlier. It was. Then he wishes the death of Duncan to happen with no consequences to follow. He feels that if he could stop the reactions following his death he would be able to happily welcome the future. The phrase "his surcease" (1.7.4)[48] means Duncan's death, while "success" (1.7.4) has the Empsonian ambiguity meaning, according to Cunningham, both 'prosperous issue' and 'succession'.[49] Prosperous issue means the imperial crown, and succession means the inheritors of the throne. These two things are now intertwined in Macbeth's mind. 'Surcease' and 'success' introduce the conflict raging through him, and the rest of the soliloquy develops in order to intimate us about the hesitant aspect of Macbeth's nature, which contrasts sharply with Lady Macbeth's "prayer for power to carry out the deed."[50] Her speech expresses her feelings caused by a decision she has forced unto herself, whereas Macbeth's soliloquy is caused by a genuinely-felt realisation about the moral dimension of a problem. That is, if this murder ('but this blow' [4]) is the 'be-all' and 'end-all' (5) of everything, then he would be happy with his life on "this bank and shoal

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[47] See Clemen, pp. 152-3.

[48] Grove, *Focus*, p. 143. He points to the possibility of pun on the words *success* and *surcease*, *assassination* and *consequence* and *trammel* and *catch*: "We feel *assassination* and *consequence*, *surcease* and *success* snatching at each other."

[49] Muir, p. 37

[50] Muir quotes Symons on p. xliii.

of time" (6), which means, the earth; and if that happens, then he would 'jump' (7), that is, not care for or ignore the after-life. Muir's interpretation here differs slightly. He explains 'jump' as risk, or 'skip over' or 'evade' the thought of the life to come. He explains 'life to come' not in the sense of Macbeth's remaining years on earth, but as echoing the prayer-book phrase ('the life of the world to come') both in *Wint* and in *Macbeth*.[51]

What makes Macbeth hesitate? His inner conscience, or his fear of the reprisals? Critics seem to differ from each other in their opinions. Moulton has considered this speech as a "a proof that he was worried only by practical considerations."[52] But, Bradley very emphatically rejects any idea of Macbeth's being deterred by the thought of 'practical considerations'. He thinks that for Macbeth who opened the pate of any rival without a moment's thought could not have been cowed by the fear of reprisals. He points out that though Macbeth is thoroughly a man of action, still he has an imagination which, as we should understand, has a strong moral mooring about which he himself is not aware. Rejecting the idea of 'consequences' as 'ridiculous', Bradley emphasises that "what really holds him back is the hideous vileness of the deed." [53]

Thus Bradley diagnoses Macbeth's dilemma as ensuing from his moral sense which he is not ready to take into account. This is the problem bothering Macbeth so much, and the more he tries to subdue his conscience the more it rises up. It cries out, as if in a thousand voices, 'Sleep no more', and pity, as Grove comments, "helpless-seeming, strides the blast powerfully."[54] Macbeth's imagination is indicative of his very deep conscience, but ambition still pushes him forward and he fails to realise that he cannot, or rather should not, become the King by killing the King. Then, is it his conscience that tries to deter him from the action, and not the fear of reprisals?

While Bradley's reading is infallible, he is assuming, basing on Macbeth's asides delivered earlier that Macbeth is talking about his conscience which does not allow him

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[51] Muir, p. 38.
[52] Muir, p. 36.

[53] Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy* (MacMillan, rpt. 1971), p. 297 & p. 299.
[54] Grove, *Focus*, p. 137.

to forget thinking about the consequences of the murder. We feel that this awakening of the conscience will not be made obvious to us until the dagger soliloquy (2.1.33-63), or when Macbeth will utter the 'Sleeep no more' phrases. At this point he is surely contemplating the practical hazards subsequently to follow the murder.[55] Only if those obstacles (to convince people that he had no hand in the murder, to tackle Banquo who has the knowledge of his encounter with the witches, etc.) were overcome, he would be happy to "jump the life to come" (1.7.7) - which means, to live the future life. The repetition of the word 'done' three times in the space of two lines signifies Macbeth's concern about the deed. Macbeth also talks about the "even-handed justice" (1.7.10) that brings the "poisoned chalise / To our own lips" (1.7.11-20) which only too well recognises the perils to be faced for risks undertaken for illegal material gains. The plain meaning is that the even-handedness of justice which he now recognises as existing on this earth is capable enough of bringing the poisonous cup back to his lips. Clemen argues that this realisation is "a surprising acknowledgement from one who has seemed to indulge in illusions."[56] Rightly so, but this hesitance can be equated with Hamlet's confusion about justice. Macbeth's is apparently a concern with the temporal judgment, but Hamlet's is inlaid with the difference between the secular justice and the justice from the higher authority. When Hamlet becomes convinced that Claudius is the killer, he still shows, as Philip Edwards says, a Kierkegaadian uncertainty about the authenticity of the confirmation from above.[57] Who guarantees that the Ghost is not a bad ghost! Thus Bradley's perception that his conscience is the greatest obstacle, and not the practical considerations, does not seem to be applicable at this point, though in an ultimate analysis Macbeth's conscience will prove to be giving him the main resistance.

In the process of his thinking, Macbeth brings up the personality of Duncan's for an assessment. This phase of the passage highlights Duncan's virtues which, we assume, he intends to draw in comparison with his own inferior qualities - though here, unlike Hamlet's comparative rendition of the characters of his father and his uncle or Antony's

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[55] Clemen, p. 153, explains, "If no consequences were to be feared on earth then the deed could easily be carried out".

[56] Clemen, p. 153.

[57] Edwards, "Tragic Balance in 'Hamlet'", in *Shakespeare Survey*, 36, (1983), pp. 43-52.

comparing himself with Caesar in *Antony and Cleopatra*, the comparison is implied, not stated. He talks about Duncan's being one of his relatives, and of his being meek which has won him many friends who would be a threat to him in the future if he usurped Duncan. Thus, Macbeth's hesitant mood vindicates not so much the bite of the conscience as the fear for his own safety, though the reasoning differentiating between conscience and fear is almost indivisible. That is, howsoever he is resisted by his conscience, he is also concerned with his own safety, though the demarcating line is tenuous. Macbeth is thus deterred not only by his conscience but also by, as Clemen says, "objective judgment"[58], which may be understood in terms of his relationship with Duncan, his duties toward him, and his own welfare.

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

The guest and host relationship is now at the top of his considerations. He is supposed to be the protector of Duncan who is not only his kinsman (Macbeth is Duncan's first cousin) and King, but also his guest, thus not double but in treble trust.[59] Besides, in order to project the enormity of Macbeth's crime, Shakespeare deviates from Holinshed and reduces the age gap between the historical Duncan and Macbeth, and he also transforms Duncan from a rough feudal lord to a soft, benign king - "a surrogate father-figure, and a holy man," so that the killing of the King takes on an enormous proportion

[58] Edwards, p. 47.
[59] Foakes, *Focus*, p. 15.

- pity rousing universal sorrow.[60] In a story of hospitality from Arab, we know of a certain man who gave shelter to a fugitive but came to discover that that very guest was the killer of his own son, yet he allowed him to stay overnight, and when the dawn broke out he asked him to leave explaining everything to him and also threatening that in future if he ever found him he would take the revenge, though this time he could not do it as he was his guest. Macbeth seems to be far off from this ethics.

The soliloquy continues with the most striking image ever conceived:

> .... 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-tongued against
>
> The deep damnation of his taking -off ,
>
> And pity, like a naked new-born babe,
>
> Striding the blast, or heaven's cherubin, horsed
>
> Upon the sightless couriers of the air,
>
> Shall blow the horrid deed in every eye
>
> That tears shall drown the wind. (1.7. 16-25)

These lines describing Duncan's noble qualities run on without any break in syntax producing one of Shakespeare's most apocalyptic image - that of the naked new-born

[60] Foakes, *Focus*, p. 15.

baby.[61] He first recognises two of his virtues, his being of humble deportation, and his being transparent in his office. Then comes the striking image of the virtues turning into angels, who are equipped with trumpets to clamour loudly against his (Macbeth's) crime. Then pity which will rise, as if from the dead Duncan's ashes, is imaged like a new-born baby who will travel on an abstract horse made of air, over every blast or through every portion of atmosphere, to protest 'the horrid deed' (24) and whose campaign will bring tears from everybody thereby flooding the air itself. The reference to 'the eye' is significant as it proves, once again, that in the eye-hand opposition the eye connotes sympathy and the hand cruelty.[62]

French holds that in these lines Macbeth uses images that vindicate Duncan as combining both masculine and feminine qualities: " He combines 'masculine' authority with 'feminine' meekness, concern with himself with concern for the whole. He is nutritive...he incarnates harmonious unity." [63] Foakes thinks that the speech compresses images that denote that Macbeth is unable to understand himself. Knowing fully well that the killing is 'deep damnation', he goes forward, a tendency that Moretti suggests as the 'unknowable element' [64] that is essential in Shakespeare's tragic character. Duncan's meek nature, as pointed out by Macbeth, and his being transparent in his official duties are virtues formidable to erase from people's memory. Macbeth's own image of Duncan's virtues flying like angels apotheosises Duncan, thus making his removal from the throne all the more horrifying. Then Macbeth uses the most-discussed image of the naked new born baby in order to emphasise the pity that Duncan will definitely arouse in the minds of the subjects. No image can be more apt to characterise pity, especially because Macbeth, a childless man, is using this. Shakespeare makes it further complicated by associating the naked new born babe with an activity too enormous to

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[61] Clemen, pp. 153–4.
[62] Muir, p. xxiii.

[63] French, p. 269.

[64] Moretti, 45n, p. 82.

imagine a child doing it: the child will stride the blast.[65] Not only that, 'heaven's cherubim' (here cherubim can mean both the angel-messengers or the divine children) will ride on 'the sightless couriers' (" 'invisible runners' i.e. the winds,"[66]), and by rendering the 'horrid deed' to everyone will bring out tears which will 'drown the wind'. Thus the innocence of Duncan takes on a heavenly dimension. But this is only a partial reading. Shakespeare has imbued the naked child imagery with implications that thematically integrate with the larger issues of the play, like the conduct of the evil. Clemen is of the opinion that the moral line of the play is established in the sense that the weakest of the human beings is attributed with cosmic powers that can defy evil: "Evil is confronted here not by yet more powerful avenging spirits but by an infant that is the weakest of all human beings and yet is endowed with the greatest cosmic power..."[67] He sums up the moral: "The visualisation of pity is, incidentally, one of many pieces of evidence that in Shakespeare's tragedies, however much the powers of evil may abound, there is always an awareness of goodness and positive values."[68]

Brooks has noted the same moral in pity being imaged as the child, though he discusses the point from a totally different perspective.[69] He says that when Macbeth wants the consequences (now in Brooks's sense the consequences are transferred to meaning children) to surcease he actually speaks against the successors, that is, the children. But it so happens that the Witches predict about Banquo starting a royal lineage, and not Macbeth. Paradoxically, therefore, Macbeth has prayed for non-fatherhood which he now has to bemoan. This realisation makes Macbeth envy Banquo, as he senses the futility of not having children. Banquo is killed, but Fleance, his son escapes. Macbeth worries. He goes back to the Witches to ascertain whether their previous predictions about Banquo's lineage still hold (4.1). The Witches show him two

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[65] Muir, p. 39. Wilson Knight has defined 'blast' as the sound of the trumpet, and then questions how can a baby actually ride over the blast. But Muir, who quotes Knight, thinks that in spite of his doubt Knight is correct in imagining the child as riding the sound of the trumpet.

[66] Muir, p. 39.

[67] Clemen, p. 154.

[68] Clemen, p. 155.

[69] Cleanth Brooks, "The Naked Babe and the Cloak of Manliness," in Wain, ed. *Macbeth* (Casebook Series), pp. 183 - 201.

babies - one crowned and the other bloody. His anxiety increases. We hear him yearning for male-children - "Bring forth man-children only" (1.7.72), he says to his wife possibly to counteract Banquo's children with his own. But Lady Macbeth's role at this point is counter-productive. To Macbeth's "We will proceed no further in this business"(1.7.31), she refers to her imagined courage that if need be, she might dash the brains of her suckling child (1.7.51-9). This statement, as Brooks says, actually goes against Macbeth's very desire for successors: "Lady Macbeth is willing to go to any length to grasp the future: she would willingly dash out the brains of her own child if it stood in her way to that future. But this is to repudiate the future, for the child is its symbol."[70] But before that she has taunted him as a 'coward' (1.7.43) - a direct insult to his soldierly manhood. Macbeth instantly declares "I dare do all that may become a man" (1.7.46). But ironically his daring only transpires into his starting a war on children. But, both Malcolm and Donalbain have escaped, so has Fleance, and only Macduff's son gets killed, and that too not without defiance. But the irony catches Macbeth plumb, as when he comes to know that Macduff himself, in keeping with the Witches's prediction, was untimely born. That is, the man to kill him was not supposed to be born of a woman, and Macduff was not either, for not having a normal birth. Thus, as Brooks implies, Macbeth's war on children is not successful: "The babe here [at Macduff's announcing that he was not 'born of woman'] has defied even the thing which one feels may reasonably be predicted of him - his time of birth."[71] And, that he fails is what made obvious through the naked new-born babe image.

Brooks explains the image thus:

> Pity is like the naked babe, the most sensitive and helpless thing; yet, almost as soon as the comparison is announced, the symbol of weakness begins to turn into a symbol of strength; for the babe, though newborn, is pictured as 'Striding the blast' like an elemental force - like 'heaven's cherubim, hors'd / Upon the sightless couriers of the air'.

[70] Brooks, p. 198.

> ... [Is] Pity like the human and helpless baby, or powerful as the angel that rides the winds? It is both; and it is strong because of its very weakness. The paradox is inherent in the situation itself; and it is the paradox that will destroy the over-brittle rationalism on which Macbeth founds his career.[72]

Brooks is of the opinion that the image shows both the weakness and the strength of pity, thus anticipating Clemen with a wider version of pity. While Clemen prefers to see the image as being evolved from a moral perspective, Brooks sees it from the dramatic point of view.

Brian Morris, who prefers to read Macbeth as Shakespeare's least religious play, argues that in this soliloquy Macbeth's perspective ranges "from 'this bank and shoal' to 'the last syllable of recorded time', but not beyond."[73] Thus, Morris interprets these lines as having originated not from a conscientious dilemma but from a deep awareness that 'even-handed justice' prevails in this world. So from a practical point of view the consequences - as opposed to Bradley's view of conscience being the inner resistant - are political rather than psychological.

> So, in this speech, Macbeth is content to dismiss death, heaven , hell and judgment from his calculation, and concentrates on the fact that 'We still have judgment here'; this 'even-handed Justice' is the stumbling-block, and his problem is how to circumvent it. He is unconcerned about the *dies irae* and terrible judgment of God. The point is enforced in the deadly irony of what follows. Duncan's virtues 'Will plead like angels,' and, pity, like heaven's cherubim, 'Shall blow the horrid deed in every eye'. The 'virtues' will arouse the 'pity' in Macbeth's contemporaries, and that

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[71] Brooks, p. 199.
[72] Brooks, p. 200.

[73] Morris, "The Kingdom, the power and the glory in *Macbeth*," in Brown, *Focus* p. 30.

> would be a nuisance. The angels and the cherubim, God's ministers and messengers, are no more than similes and illustrations of the immediate political problem.[74]

Morris's view is obviously a much reductive presentation of Macbeth, because through his soliloquies he lets us know that something deeper and unnameable is harrowing him, and that is the enriching aspect about him, otherwise he would have ended as a soldier to have unthoughtfully committed an act of regicide. Besides, Morris's view that Macbeth is not informed with religious coda is difficult to find support for. Honigmann on the contrary thinks that in everything he speaks about there are religious overtones: "Macbeth differs from almost all other Shakespearean villains in expressing deeply religious convictions, not once but many times, endorsed by the full force of some of Shakespeare's best poetry."[75]

In the scope of this speech we can view if Macbeth is a Machiavellian. According to Moretti, all these deliberations prove that Macbeth is a poor Machiavellian.[76] A Machiavellian may hesitate about the procedure toward reaching his goal, but he may not question the validity of his goal. We cannot imagine Richard III uttering these soul-searching lines. Machiavellism, traditionally, is defined as grabbing of the opportunity for power. Now, the way to power (or Bacon's 'great place') involves cruelty. The formidable question is how this cruelty is to be used - well or badly? It is used well when one can, by the application of it, promote oneself as well as ensure one's own safety, while the successful repression of enemies is also the expression of cruelty used well. Richard III, Edmund, and Lorenzo in *The Spanish Tragedy* are examples of Machiavellians who use cruelty successfully - of course just until the end-scenes when they are destroyed by their own villainies. Cruelty used badly is when the doer faces the

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[74] Morris, p. 31.

[75] E.A.J. Honigmann, *Shakespeare: Seven Tragedies: The dramatist's manipulation of response* (The MacMillan Press Ltd, 1976), p. 138.

[76] Franco Moretti "The Great Eclipse: Tragic Form as the Deconstruction of Sovereignty," in John Drakakis, ed. *Shakespearean Tragedy* (Longman Critical Readers [Longman. London and New York, 1992], p. 65. The essay (pp.45-84) is a good help for understanding Machiavelli.

consequences of his doing from the beginning. Macbeth is a Machiavellian figure at fault because though he is "inspired by the counsels of Machiavelli to the new prince,"[77] he bungles in the way as he acts like Machiavelli but thinks like Hooker.[78] Machiavellism, in the stage sense, is concerned with scheming and plotting, with machinations and execution, while Hooker's ideas are concerned with traditional values. In the perspective of the stage, Machiavelli's imperatives motivate the dynamics of the plot, and Hooker's values are woven in the moral imagination displayed by Macbeth in spite of his going for the killing. As Bradley has located Macbeth's dilemma to have issued from the discrepancy between action and imagination, so has Moretti identified the problem as evolving from a bifurcated premise, one axis of which is determined by the imperatives of the plot, and the other by those of the moral. This pull of the two forces, according to Moretti, characterises *Macbeth* as "the axis of actions (the plot) is governed by one logic and the axis of values (the paradigm) by another, without either ever succeeding in overwhelming or expunging the other (as happens, in obviously different directions, in Machiavelli and Hooker)."[79]

The mixed aspects of Machiavelli and Hooker in Macbeth both inhibit and liberate him against and for the regicide. Macbeth is caught between his allegiance to Duncan on the one hand and his desire to usurp him on the other. This is, however, a familiar pattern in a Shakespearean tragic hero to be 'irreparably a split character'[80] because of the working of opposed and irreconcilable forces in him. And, the irreconcilable forces emerge from a political context. Both Macbeth and Duncan are, according to Hawkins, tied to each other on as many as three levels: pre-feudal, which was based on blood kinship; feudal, in which "relationships [were] still based on personal obligation but no longer necessarily confined to familial ties"; and, third, "the king was the peak of the feudal hierarchy but bound by feudal ties both to protect and consult his leading vassals".[81] The fourth type of political relationship which is not considered by

[77] Moretti, p. 65.
[78] Moretti, pp. 63-4.
[79] Moretti, p. 67.
[80] Moretti, p. 62.
[81] Hawkins, p. 161.

Shakespeare is the institutional immunity of the king - the theory of the king's two bodies. The king became both personal and impersonal, thus becoming invulnerable to rebellion and all such agitation, including regicide. Hawkins writes, "The elevation of the king highlighted the probable gap between the fallibility of the actual king and the infallibility of his office. . . Kingship became institutionalised, that is, the king could act impersonally, he could not die, and he could do no wrong."[82] However, Hawkins corrects Ornstein's view about the privileges of absolute monarchism by stressing the point that while James I could have been called an absolutist, "his behaviour in practice was defensible constitutionally."[83]

Macbeth refuses to judge whether his action will be defensible constitutionally, and this failure leads him to wrongly define his relationship with Duncan. He does not see Duncan as a constitutional monarch beyond and above personal relationship, but rather emphasises on his personal links with him - as kinsman, host and subject.[84] Walter Cohen argues that Shakespeare's tragedies show the inner conflicts shaping up within the same class of society - which is the feudal class.[85] The feudal monarchy came into clash with the absolute monarchy, but since the nobility and the emerging monarch opposing them belonged to the same class the struggle did not have a tragic dimension. Macbeth falters here too. "In murdering Duncan, a man who is at once his kinsman, his guest, and his lord," says Cohen, " Macbeth violates specifically feudal social relations, not, of course, in the name of economic calculation, but in allegiance to an amoral ambition whose superficial rationality leads inexorably away from personal fulfilment and toward a meaningless nihilism."[86] His inability to judge Duncan as a monarch constitutionally protected, and this disregard, if considered as a lack of political wisdom, coupled with his deliberations in this soliloquy which show the workings of his conscience, makes a strong case against Macbeth, and proves him to be a poor

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[82] Hawkins, p. 161.
[83] Hawkins, p. 163.
[84] Hawkins, p. 163.

[85] Walter Cohen, "Aristocratic Failure," in Drakakis ed. *Tragedy*, pp. 101-2.
[86] Cohen, p. 103.

Machiavellian. Macbeth's reaction after the killing is a good pointer: "I am afraid to think what I have done; / Look on't again I dare not" (2.2.48-9) - impossible for a Richard to utter.

Commenting on Macbeth's failure Moretti writes:

> Political murder, which in Machiavelli may be profitably reflected upon and even more profitably put to use as a warning to enemies, becomes in Macbeth the unthinkable and unprofitable deed per excellence....Macbeth's dilemma is that coexisting in him are the imperative of culture, will and reason together. He cannot yet unburden the exercise of power - power as such - from the need for its cultural legitimation. This co-presence of irreconcilable drives deprives his life of a unified meaning: 'It is a tale / Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, / Signifying nothing' (5.5.26-8).[87]

The soliloquy ends with another telling image, that of the rider sliding over the top of the horse:

> .... I have no spur
>
> To prick the sides of my intent , but only
>
> Vaulting ambition which o'erleaps itself
>
> And falls on Th.' other." (1.7.25-8)

[87] Moretti, pp.63-4.

Since Macbeth is a soldier, the image of the overzealous equestrian is apt for him to use. It suggests both: the way he will work out his ambition, and the way his ruin lies. However, it cannot escape our notice that the image may be slightly disingenuous as failure in mounting a horse cannot really invoke, by comparison, the image of failed murder as the serious nature of murder is too heavy to be compared to the art of riding. Clemen notices a note of resignation as well as failure anticipated in this speech: "Ambition is there, but evidently not in sufficient measure to justify such action....The implied image of the rider who leaps so violently into the saddle that he falls down on the other side already anticipates failure."[88] Foakes also notices Macbeth's resigned mood: "His soliloquy ... ends with his one reference to ambition, as the only 'spur' to prick on his intention."[89]

And, both Foakes and Clemen as well as Peter Hall agree that if Lady Macbeth had not countered Macbeth's decision, 'We will proceed no further in this business' (1.7.31) with the direct provocation of 'coward' (1.7.43), he would not have gone ahead with the murder.[90]

Morris has picked up the point of 'ambition' for a different kind of analysis. He categorically denies Macbeth any political ambition. He thinks that Macbeth is not seen to be driven by a desire to glorify himself as the king of Scotland: "...indeed, there is no real political dimension to Macbeth's political thinking."[91] Macbeth seems to have taken it for granted that 'greatness' must belong to him, and the only way to become great is to seek the highest position of the state - a thought in which he is as amply incited by Lady Macbeth.[92]

We have already talked about Macbeth's being an unsuccessful Machiavellian. The question of his right to be ambitious has also been raised. But ambition was a popular

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[88] Clemen, p. 155.

[89] Foakes, p. 15. Foakes has counted that the word 'ambition' is used only three times in the play. Page 10.
[90] See Clemen, *Soliloquies*, p. 155; Foakes in *Focus*, p.16; and, Hall in *Focus*, p.236.
[91] Morris, p. 35.
[92] Morris, p. 42.

requirement to be had by a Medieval elite. The concept that permitted right of resistance was in direct clash with the opposite idea of the monarch's divine rights, and theoretically it was not possible to raise a rebellion against the king. But, in reality, as we have pointed out earlier, the king was not as absolute as he was thought to be. Besides, in Scotland tanistry was in force (though not emphasised by Shakespeare) rather than the inheritance through the law of primogeniture.[93] Thus, it is not all that unjustified for Macbeth to have the ambition for kingship. But to have ambition is one thing, and to realise it another. Unlike Claudius in *Hamlet*, Macbeth seems to be most unready for the throne when he attains it. He makes wrong moves one after another, and does little or no counselling with the people he can trust. Claudius at least has Polonius to do the scheming on his behalf. Macbeth is supported by his wife, but that too stops short of supporting him during the crisis, because he has already abandoned the idea of seeking advice from her by the time he contemplates Banquo's murder. He seems to have simply become obsessed with the idea of power, without any attempt at sustaining it politically. So, in defining Macbeth's relationship to power, Morris holds that Macbeth does not particularly seek the power of the realpoitic, but events just lead him to power. After assuming power he bungles his job, because he acts neither like Claudius nor Octavius Caesar.[94]

This perhaps explains why Macbeth seems to have woven the image of the overzealous horse-rider in defining his ambition for power. He is, in this later part of the soliloquy, giving birth to a slight contradiction with what he said in the earlier part. Here he seems to be more concerned about achieving the great place. In the way, however, he does not deliberate the point that the very life of the King (Duncan) is at stake, as Brutus does not realise that he cannot kill Caesar in the name of democracy, or Othello fails to recognise that he cannot kill Desdemona in the name of justice. As he is not thinking of the murder in all its seriousness, he can conceive the image of the horse-rider, which we have already observed as not being very befitting an image with the serious issue of

[93] Hawkins, p. 163.

[94] Hawkins, p. 40.

murder. In the earlier part of the soliloquy, however, Macbeth is all concerned about this one killing which looks all but impossible to him.

This soliloquy is perhaps only second to Hamlet's "To be or not to be" soliloquy in depth, range and variety. Through our discussion we have tried to piece together different, and often contrary, voices of critics. In doing so, we have come up with our own vision of the soliloquy which may be summed up in the following way.

First, we recognise that the soliloquy mainly proposes to see Macbeth in a dilemma about his plan of killing Duncan. We first agree that the ambience of the soliloquy is wholly ironical and that the use of the conditional structure has intensified the paradoxical nature of the speech. The question that rises is what it is that stops Macbeth from the killing - his conscience, or the practical considerations? Bradley chooses to hold onto the first. But we have shown that the prick of conscience does not really feature in this soliloquy, and with Morris we agree to the fact that it is practical considerations that are obstructing Macbeth. We have also shown that the awareness of the difficulty of his job rises in Macbeth by implicitly drawing a comparative perspective between Duncan and himself. The comparison reaches a high with the conception of the naked new-born babe image. Though all critics agree to accept the infantile image as not merely indicative of weakness but also of cosmic power, it is Cleanth Brooks who has very brilliantly suggested that Lady Macbeth's wish to kill a suckling baby as well as Macbeth's war on children has proved to be counter-productive as it is for inheritors that Macbeth is waging all these wars. The soliloquy has also invited discussion on the nature of politics the world of *Macbeth* contains, and we have shown, basing our study on the historian, Michael Hawkins, that ambition was not unwarranted for in the age which the play dramatises, though however Macbeth fails to reckon with the fact that the King was also constitutionally protected. We have also highlighted the view that Macbeth cannot be considered as a Machiavellian villain as he is so thoroughly oriented by feudal values which in spite of himself he cannot ignore. In fact, the present soliloquy is anything but Machiavellian, and the fact that Macbeth speaks over his crisis for such a long time is the proof that the strong traditional feudal values - attachment with the king, etc.- still haunt his mind even though he needs to shed them off in order to do the killing. Finally, we

have discovered that by conceiving the image of the inept horse-rider Macbeth actually shows the blind side of his nature, because to compare any aspect of horse-riding with any aspect of man-slaughtering is possible only when one takes a very reductive view of the human life. And, Macbeth unfortunately does that (just at this point, because later on in the dagger soliloquy, he will be as seriously pondering over the issue as ever), because momentarily - going against his own conscience - he, like Brutus and Othello, is ready to sacrifice a human being in the name of an ideology, here though Macbeth's ambition is not an ideology but an impulse.

Macbeth's next soliloquy is called the 'dagger' soliloquy: 2.1.33-64. Clemen summarises the happenings in between the two Macbeth soliloquies thus: "In the dialogue which followed the first soliloquy Lady Macbeth has succeeded in making Macbeth change his mind. Before the beginning of the soliloquy he said: 'We will proceed no further in this business' (31), showing that the apocalyptic vision has made him waver in his resolve, but at the end of the scene we hear the opposite: 'I am settled' (80)."[95] We also note that in his conversation with Banquo (2.1.1-32), Macbeth cautiously drops the hint to Banquo to see whether he would support him in case Duncan is removed (either through natural death or through murder - Macbeth is ambiguous), to which Banquo unambiguously states that he will keep his bosom "franchis'd, and allegiance clear" (28). Muir agrees with Bradley that Banquo means to say, "he will only join his party if there is to be no foul play."[96] Clemen also points to Macbeth's adroit manner by which he smoothly covers his intention of killing Banquo, while at the same time he disarms Banquo of any suspicion by showing excessive concern about his plans on the following day, while we know how hard he is struggling to maintain the facade. We wait eagerly for that moment when Macbeth will be alone on the stage divulging his inner mind.[97] He begins the soliloquy with referring to the dagger which, according to

[95] Clemen, p. 157.
[96] Muir, p. 47n.

[97] Muir, p. 158.

Clemen, can be considered as a partner thus conforming to the category of soliloquies in which an object or phenomenon is used to create a quasi-dialogue atmosphere.[98]

Is this a dagger which I see before me,

The handle toward my hand? (2.1.34-5)

The question, which is at once startling and hallucinatory, reveals Macbeth's confusion between reality and unreality - first noticed in his utterance 'nothing is / But what is not' (1.3.140-1). The previous soliloquy also started with a question, but that was asked more in a reflective mood. Here the tone of urgency cannot be missed. The scary tone has combined brisk physical movement. On the dramatic plane this speech requires a lot of nervous and frenzied shifting of stance on the part of the actor, because the dagger has appeared from nowhere, and it is moving and changing places; and so, Macbeth has to speak out his lines while making a lot of movements on the stage. Critics have, however, split opinions about the exact location of the dagger. Macbeth is waiting for Lady Macbeth to ring the bell when his drink is ready. He has already seen off Banquo and Fleance, and the servant has gone away to attend Lady Macbeth. In his waiting he suddenly sights the dagger in the air and starts addressing it. Some earlier critics thought that the dagger must have been placed over a table at which Macbeth is sitting. Muir records the following comments: "'the dagger should not be in the air, but on a table; he thinks it real at first' (Chambers). 'Macbeth is to wait for the bell; and to wait is to sit' (Wilson). But if the scene is laid in the courtyard, would there be a table? The speech is not realistic; but in answer to Chambers it may be said that if Macbeth indeed thought that the dagger a real one he would not begin with a question."[99] Since Macbeth is seen suddenly caught by the macabre vision of the dagger, a standing posture would have been more in order. Muir quotes Curry as suggesting that the dagger "is an hallucination caused immediately, indeed, by disturbed bodily humours and spirits but

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[98] Clemen, p. 158.
[99] Muir, p. 47

ultimately by demonic powers, who have so controlled and manipulated these bodily forces as to produce the effect they desire."[100] Morris comments: "... the debate in Macbeth's mind is as to whether the weapon is real or 'but a dagger of the mind'. The phantasm becomes a stage presence, and the dramatic spectacle is complicated by the 'real' dagger which Macbeth draws."[101] And, again the very confusion about the location of the dagger in itself constitutes the play's dichotomy between what is and what is not. Now the object materialising before his eyes is a dagger, but we do not have to be sure whether Shakespeare wants us to take it as a spectral thing or as a thing symbolically externalising the inner craving in Macbeth, that will also finally urge him to use a dagger to kill the King. We have the options to consider the dagger as working on both levels - as an independent image anticipating the murderous thought Macbeth has, or as a token externalising the same. The dagger therefore is like the Witches - both external and externalising the internal - "a kind of supernatural solicitation."[102] Clemen has observed that the "vision of the dagger occurs in that same deceptive twilight in which the witches' scene took place."[103] He further argues that for a modern audience the dagger may appear as "a psychological projection of Macbeth's desires, ...[while for the Elizabethans it might have appeared ] as a temptation put in his way by supernatural powers."[104]

How does an actor play out this episode? Palmer, noting that in the dagger scene, "Macbeth's face is more often registering horror and fear," refers to a contemporary account of Garrick's doing it: "who ever saw the immortal actor start at, and trace the imaginary dagger previous to Duncan's murder, without embodying, by sympathy, insubstantial air into the alarming shape of such a weapon?"[105] The dramatic gesture is mixed with tortuous delusion. He repeatedly tries to get hold of the dagger, and he fails repeatedly, acknowledging the difficulty in bridging a gap between something which he

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[100] Muir quotes Curry, *Shakespeare's Philosophical Patterns*, p. 84; pp. 47 -8.

[101] Morris, p. 49.
[102] Michael Goldman, "*Language and action in* Macbeth," in *Focus*, p. 147.
[103] Clemen, p. 159.
[104] Clemen, p. 159.
[105] D.J. Palmer, " 'A new Gorgon': visual effects in *Macbeth*," in *Focus*, p. 59.

realises to be false and his inner craving to accept it as true. Goldman suggests that this speech explores fully the potential for evil.[106]

... Come, let me clutch thee.

I have thee not, and yet I see thee still.

Art thou not, fatal vision, sensible

To feeling as to sight? (2.1.34 - 7)

Macbeth invites the dagger to come to his hand, but it is chimerical, and he cannot hold it. Foakes, however, maintains that the "dagger of the mind is, in its way, as real as the one Macbeth draws, though conjured out of words."[107] Macbeth questions if it is not equally responsive to touch as it is to sight. This introduces us once again to the dichotomy in this play between the hand and the eye. It first appears in the 'aside' in Act 1, scene 4, lines 48-53: "The eye wink at the hand" (52). In that aside he wants the eye not to see what his hand will be doing. Here, however, the reverse appeal is made. The eye is seeing a dagger which he does not know if palpable. The eye-hand opposition is best dramatised in the next scene (2.2). Macbeth looks at his bloody hand and exclaims, "This is a sorry sight" (2.2.18). A little later: "What hands are here! Ha, they pluck out mine eyes" (2.2.57). He observes the functions of his organs with, as Muir says, "a strange objectivity."[108] While he is worried whether all the oceans will wash this blood off his hand (2.2.55-61), Lady Macbeth, as has been noted earlier, shallowly says, "A little water clears us of this deed" (2.2.65). Muir further informs us that Shakespeare may

[106] Goldman, pp. 140 -52.

[107] Foakes, p.17.,

[108] Muir, pp. xxvii -xxviii.

have been influenced by the Biblical injunctions to pluck out the eye that offends, and to cut off the hand that offends.[109]

Or art thou but

A dagger of the mind, a false creation

Proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain? (2.1.37 - 39)

In these lines Macbeth repeats his doubt as to whether the dagger is real or not. He vacillates between believing the dagger as coming to him from the outside, or as, more significantly, conjured out of his anguished mind. The dagger takes on a symbolical expression embodying both Macbeth's terror and desire.[110] All this questioning and confusion again is the gauge of Macbeth's conscience which surfaces to counteract the thought of murder. In fact, the soliloquies in the play are the safeguard for saving him from the calumnies he would otherwise have earned.

I see thee yet, in form as palpable

As this which now I draw.

Thou marshall'st me the way that I was going,

And such an instrument I was to use. (2.1.40 -43)

Against the visionary dagger he has one solid actual dagger to mention, which, according to Clemen, is also symbolic, as it is the weapon which will be used for the murder.[111] The parallel existence of the two daggers may confuse Macbeth, but it intensifies the thought of murder. The spectral dagger has forced him to draw out his own dagger, thus, as Goldman suggests, literally pushing "him a step further toward

[109] Muir, p. xxviii.
[110] Muir, p. 17.
[111] Clemen, p. 160.

murder."[112] The 41st line is a half line which, according to Chambers, is "filled out by the action of drawing the dagger."[113]

Lines 42 & 43 definitely suggest that the dagger has been a creation of Macbeth's mind. It not only guides Macbeth to Duncan's bedchamber, but also appears to be a replica of the actual dagger. This also explains Macbeth as being able to modify the reality according to his wish. His enormous imaginative power may also create a confusion because what Macbeth does in the play does not support the emotional richness revealed by him. Thus a pattern in the characterisation of Macbeth is that he lets out thoughts so deeply searching that against them his action seems dwarfed. We feel unable to condemn him for his action. Such input of imagination has Shakespeare put into Macbeth that we do not seem to feel enraged but rather anaesthetised toward his crimes.

> Mine eyes are made the fools o'th' other senses,
>
> Or else worth all the rest. (2.1. 44 -5)

The opposition between the senses is reiterated. But the lines are more complicated than Muir assumes: "when he sees the imaginary dagger, he decides that his eyes have been made the fools of the other senses, or else worth all the rest."[114] Strangely enough it does not explain the lines. Foakes explains these lines in clearer terms: "... his eyes are worth all the other senses in so far as they show through this illusion what is compelling him from within."[115] Morris's reading is significant. He thinks that this is not only a statement suggesting the "inversion of reality and appearance," but also a reversal of values: "The uncertainty in this, the idea that one testimony may be as valid as another, anaesthetises the moral conscience sufficiently to permit this special killing to be done. Thereafter, the phantasmagoric world is the stage on which the agonies of guilt are

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[112] Goldman, p. 147.

[113] Muir, p. 48.

[114] Muir, Intr. Xxvii.

enacted."[116] The idea Macbeth suggests is that his eyes which have spotted the dagger have made a fool of the other senses meaning that those senses have lost their functions; that is, the hand cannot feel the palpability of the dagger; or, the eyes are worth the functions of all other organs combined.

.... I see thee still,

And on thy blade and dudgeon gouts of blood,

Which was not so before. (2.1.45 -7)

Further exteriorisation of his feeling. The visionary dagger now catches drops of blood, an anticipatory projection of the murder. Macbeth has almost chalked out in his mind what will happen when he commits the murder. In the transparency of his thinking the blood drops do not escape his perception. That he is being able to recreate the imminent in such a graphic order not only confirms the strength of his imagination but also puts into proper perspective his concern about the consequences, and why he wished that they did not exist. This is the mainstay of his character: his conscience. The present soliloquy and the previous one expressly indicate he is not able to escape his conscience.

..... ..... ..... There's no such thing.

It is the bloody business which informs

Thus to mine eyes. (2.1.47 -49)

A small sentence, 'There's no such thing', works with full effect as it denotes the crisis Macbeth is facing. The beauty of this soliloquy is that the contrite condition of Macbeth's thinking is effectively punctuated by a short sentence. Macbeth now swerves back to his reasonable mind, trying to dispel the image originating in his murderous mind. The eye is again mentioned as the agent capable of making him see the vision. The

[115] Foakes, p. 17.

eyes only show him what he is seeing inside his own mind. The word 'business' is used both by Lady Macbeth and now by Macbeth to designate the murder, as if they are, as Clemen says, unwilling "to use the actual word, which does not occur until later in the soliloquy in the phrase 'wither'd Murther' (52)."[117]

... ..... ..... ..... Now o'er the one half-world
Nature seems dead, and wicked dreams abuse
The curtained sleep. (2.1.49 -51)

Now the soliloquy changes perspective. From the narrow but intense convulsive dialogue with the dagger, Macbeth now looks at the night outside. This reference to the world dead in sleep at night in a sense separates Macbeth from others, but more significantly it anticipates the prophetic lines Macbeth will utter after the killing of Duncan: 'Sleep no more Macbeth doth murder sleep'. So, sleep, the anointed balm, is equated with peace of mind. Yet that sleep is threatened by 'wicked dreams', if the mind is not on guard. Banquo, as Muir notes, could not help dreaming about the Witches in the beginning of the scene, and, therefore, he appealed, "Restrain in me the cursed thoughts that nature / Gives way to in repose" (2.1.8-9)![118] Because, on the fateful night in Macbeth's castle both Banquo and Macbeth being unable to sleep chanced to meet each other, while Duncan, as reported by Banquo, was asleep in "measureless content" (2.1.16), signifying his blessed nature.

... ... ..... .... Witchcraft celebrates
Pale Hecate's offerings, and withered murder,
Alarumed by his sentinel the wolf,
Whose howl's his watch, thus with his stealthy pace,

[116] Morris, p. 49.
[117] Clemen, p. 160.
[118] Clemen, p. 45.

With Tarquin's ravishing strides, towards his design

Moves like a ghost. (2.1.51-6)

And now Macbeth is evoking the image of the murder he is set about. He introduces a series of nocturnal images that show his familiarity with the powers of darkness.[119] All these are connected in a chain one leading inevitably to another. Hecate's ('Hecate was the goddess of classical and medieval witchcraft.'[120]) offerings are all unmentionable things, and while this celebration is going on, 'murder' is woken up as if from a deep slumber by the wolf who is acting as its watch. The howling wolf is a hungry animal, and as it has now woken up 'withered murder', the connotation to derive is that murder has also been fasting and needs human blood which Macbeth will feed it with Duncan's blood.

The speed with which 'murder' is hurrying to possess Macbeth, to take shelter in him ('towards his design') is made forceful by 'Tarquin's ravishing stride,' with the following simile of a ghost moving in long strides. Muir enters the following note: "The 'stride', according to Johnson and Knight, should not be taken as violent, but as it is coupled with 'tedious' (in R2, 1.3.268) and 'soft' in *Faerie Queene*, IV. Viii.. 37. In *Lucre.*, 365, Tarquin stalks to the chamber of Lucrece. Case refers to 'the long tip-toe stealing steps one takes in order to avoid sound by planting the feet as seldom as possible'.[121] Murder thus vividly made graphic merges into Macbeth himself. Both the image of murder and the image-creator Macbeth become one. This is possible by the sheer force of his imagination which seems to be capable of visualising all phenomena. Noting this merging of the image and the creator into one another, Goldman comments that the

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[119] Foakes says, "The lines suggest a link with the Weird Sisters, in their reference to witchcraft and to Hecate, and mark Macbeth's awareness that he is aligning himself with evil," p. 17.
And, Clemen writes, "Macbeth has a secret understanding with the demonic forces of witchcraft. It is of these that he now speaks, and it is with them that he is in league," p.161.

[120] Muir, p. 49.
[121] Muir, p. 49.

"reference to Murder's 'pace' and 'stride' leads naturally to Macbeth's own steps."[122] Silence, speed, and sureness which are 'murder's natural attributes are all put into accurate relief by the images described:

... .... ..... Thou sure and firm-set earth,

Hear not my steps which way they walk, for

Thy very stones prate of my wherabout,

And take the present horror from the time,

Which now suits with it. (2.1. 56-60)

So, with the waking of murder and its getting lodged in him, Macbeth has made up his mind to murder, and then his prayer is both that the earth does not hear his footsteps, and the stones, by echoing them, do not betray his presence. The present moment, the dead hours of the night, seems to him to be suitable for the deed, so he does not want that any noise of his walking down to Duncan's bedchamber should destroy the 'present horror', i.e., the perfect atmosphere for murder. And as graphically as before, Macbeth is able to watch himself going into action with the details all drawn, as Wilson says, "to be in keeping with the deed."[123] It is to be noted that Macbeth seems to have been able to project his image as a murderer so thoroughly that we think as if he is watching himself from outside himself.[124]

... ... ... ... Whiles I threat, he lives.

Words to the heat of deeds too cold breath gives.(2.1.60 -1)

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[122] Goldman, p. 148.

[123] Goldman, p. 50.

[124] Goldman notes, "Macbeth observes carefully, and with surprise, the psychic readjustments by which he becomes a criminal," p. 146, and Clemen says, "He speaks like a man observing himself in a dream, talking about steps as if they were separate from him," p. 162.

These two lines introduce us to a common Shakespearean concern about the discrepancy between words and deeds.[125] But here the concern is not put in a general sense that Macbeth is full of words but little in action. The concern is more specific, and not like the realisation of Hamlet when he holds 'the pale cast of thought' as a deterrent to action. Hamlet's action, like that of Macbeth, is a homicide and that of a king too. However, Hamlet is seeking revenge, while Macbeth is going to perform an act of murder which will give birth to revenge. What for Hamlet is a perturbing question is for Macbeth to ignore. Moreover, in Macbeth's case it appears not so much as a contradiction between speech and action as a process where words can conjure action. In this light, Goldman points out that the word 'threat' (60) implies that Macbeth has considered his words as 'threat' depending on his ability to transform his speech into action. As in creating the image of murder, he becomes the murder, so in creating the 'thick' atmosphere with words, Macbeth himself becomes the atmosphere, thus giving faith in the words, unlike that of Hamlet.[126]

Then a bell rings, signalling that Lady Macbeth is ready with his drink.

> I go, and it is done. The bell invites me.
>
> Hear it not, Duncan; for it is a knell
>
> That summons thee to heaven or to hell. (2.1.)

Macbeth feels that there should not be any hesitation, the deed will be done the moment he goes there. Traditional use of bell ringing is also inverted, here it is the death knell.

As Macbeth goes to kill Duncan, Lady Macbeth reveals her true self in a small soliloquy:

> Alack, I am afraid they have awaked,
>
> And 'tis not done. Th'attempt and not the deed

[125] Goldman, p. 50.
[126] Goldman, p. 149.

Confounds us. Hark! - I laid their daggers ready;
He could not miss 'em. Had he not resembled
My father as he slept, I had done't. (2.1.9-13)

Lady Macbeth removes all doubts about her true nature. By revealing that she would have been able to kill Duncan if he had not looked like her father, she makes us wonder if she could do it even if he had not.

In the next few moments however she, as pointed earlier, surprises us by her insensitivity. To Macbeth's outpourings of conscientious feeling, she asks "What do you mean?" (2.1.38), and goes to a good length in the same tone ending finally with the oft quoted line, "A little water clears us of this deed" (2.1.65). Though the fact is that she has already heard the knocking at the gate: "I hear a knocking" (2.1.63). Thomas de Quincy's famous essay "On the knocking of the Gate in Macbeth" perhaps can hardly be improved upon in showing the relation between this physical knocking at the gate and the stirring of Macbeth's conscience.[127] We only note that the 'knock within' stage direction has been repeated as many as eight times before the Porter opens the door to Macduff and Lennox.

Macbeth's next soliloquy:

... ... ... ... To be thus is nothing
But to be safely thus. Our fears in Banquo
Stick deep, and in his royalty of nature
Reigns that which would be feared. 'Tis much he dares,
And to that dauntless temper of his mind
He hath a wisdom that doth guide his valour
To act in safety. There is none but he

[127] Thomas de quincey, "On the Knocking on the Gate in *Macbeth*," in John Wain, ed., *Macbeth* (Casebook series, MacMillan, London, 1968), pp. 90-93.

Whose being I do fear, and under him
My genius is rebuked as, it is said,
Mark Antony's was by Caesar. He chid the sisters
When first they put the name of king upon me,
And bade them speak to him. Then, prophet-like,
They hailed him father to a line of kings.
Upon my head they placed a fruitless crown,
And put up a barren sceptre in my grip,
Thence to be wrenched with an unlineal hand,
No son of mine succeeding. If't be so,
For Banquo's issue have I filed my mind,
For them the gracious Duncan have I murdered,
Put rancours in the vessel of my peace
Only for them, and mine eternal jewel
Given to the common enemy of man
To make them kings, the seeds of Banquo kings.
Rather than so, come fate into the list
And champion me to th'utterance. (3.1.49 -73)

This speech, in some part, is similar to the speech where he spoke about Duncan's qualities which he considered as so strong that he felt his killing would not leave him without consequences to face. Now, in this speech, we see that the consequences have shaped themselves up in the form of the fear he is beginning to harbour about Banquo. This soliloquy therefore is wholly ironical, Macbeth has already started facing the consequences without his realising it. He has already murdered the sleeping grooms, which raises his dead-count to four (including Cawdor). The bloody instructions have

already begun to plague the inventor without his perceiving it. Foakes says, "The worst is that having scaled Everest, he finds soon that he must overcome an obstacle almost as great, another kingly figure who fills him with dread....The 'bloody instructions' he gives the murderers return to plague him in the banquet scene, when the ghost of Banquo sits in his place."[128]

Now the similarity of the two soliloquies is that he, just before killing Duncan, enumerated his qualities as standing in his way, and, likewise, herein also, Banquo's more positive aspects are being highlighted to give the impression that he may not be killed without consequences. However, this point of similarity also leads to a contradictory perspective, because Banquo's qualities are mentioned in order to support the reason why he should be killed, and Duncan's virtues were cited to tell us why he should not have been killed. Another point to note is that in his desire to become the king, Macbeth is not aware that he will have to take into consideration the fact that he is a childless man. In his eager desire to become the king the question did not strike him as important. Now after becoming the king he begins to hanker after progeny. This is rather unusual, but not impossible to occur to him. Shakespeare's characterisation gains in depth by the fact that it is only after achieving his first aim that Macbeth should discover other aims dormant in him, but consequential upon the first act.

The fact that Bunquo is alive and in the know of his encounter with the witches breeds fear in Macbeth. Hence, Banquo must be removed, along with his son. At this stage, Banquo should not be imagined as timid, though honouring the feudal values he is silent about the proceedings taking place in the court. Giving a noble portrait of Banquo, Macbeth implies that he is to be thought as a popular contestant of the throne if breach arose. Momentarily, he draws an analogy from Roman history, suggesting that Antony's genius was subdued beside Caesar's as much as his is beside Banquo's. But we see the deeper reason harrowing him: Banquo might betray. Then start his thoughts on the lineage which the witches had forecast would be Banquo's. This idea of his "unlineal hand" (64) suddenly fills up his mind with frustration. He considers the outcome of the

[128] Foakes, p. 19

first murder, and realises that it has served him a wrong end. He has actually committed homicide for the benefits of Banquo. This realisation could not have dawned on him before he killed Duncan, and therein lies the lesson for Macbeth that what he anticipated as the result of the murder had not only happened the different way, but also had presented him with new problems.

"By Act III," writes Morris, "the central scenes of the play are informed not by ambition for status,... nor by any quest for an extension of 'greatness', ... but by the restless search for what can only be called 'security of tenure'."[129] But Macbeth is not like Lady Macbeth who returns from the bedchamber without committing the murder. Macbeth is determined to come round the problem, so he decides to kill Bunquo. Fate is thus invited to play its part in his favour. Psychoanalytically speaking, Macbeth has fallen into the situation where he has to repeatedly commit crimes of the same nature in order to subside the first one. Thus he has to resolve to kill Banquo in spite of himself. Instead of gaining assurance from the murder, he starts worrying about the disclosure, and loses his sleep. Sartre has explained that the outcome of a murder is that the victim takes away peace from the murderer:

> the murderer perpetuates the intolerable situation for which he did the deed by the very act of murder: for he kills his victim because he hates being the other's object, and by the murder this relationship is rendered irremediable. The victim has taken the key of this alienation into the tomb with him: 'The death of the other constitutes me as irremediable object, exactly as my own death would do. So hatred is transformed into frustration even in its triumph.'[130]

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[129] Morris, p. 43.
[130] Quoted by Muir, p. lviii.

Another suggestion to be made about this speech is the way Macbeth considers the matter of killing a man as if he is going to kill not a man of flesh and blood, but a plastic man, an object and not a human.

Macbeth's worries are better explained if we remember that the Scotland of his time was a feudal society, the stability of which depended on allegiance of the feudal lords to the king. But the question of loyalty was at best dubious, oriented by as much selfless love as self-interest. Commenting on this ambiguous nature of relationships Hawkins writes:

> Feudal society stressed formal statements of unity: oaths, initiation ceremonies, ritualised hospitality, which were attempts to bind members of the military elite to agreed standards of behaviour. Needless to say such ceremonies would not have been stressed had these standards been naturally accepted. Banquo may protest he is 'with a most indissoluble tie \ For ever knit' (III.i.17-18) to Macbeth, but we may be sure that, as at their previous meeting (II.i), he carries a sword. The greater the need to curb men of violence, the greater the emphasis on oaths of loyalty, perjury being defined as a sin.[131]

Macbeth's last soliloquy is not a soliloquy proper, because Seyton, his attendant, is around. But Macbeth's deep utterances about life show no awareness of Seyton's presence and hence constitute a soliloquy. Now certain questions are pertinent. Whose life signifies nothing? A common man's or a murderer's? Macbeth's is a generalised opinion including both. Does Macbeth also tell us that it is only the mortality of the physical life that he is speaking about, taking no cognisance of the soul? Is this pessimism Macbeth's own or Shakespeare's? Is he a 'hardened sinner' as Bethel calls

him, or an immoral man, as Morris suggests, just "not giving a whit of concern for his immortal soul?"[132]

Let us quote the speech part by part:

..... She should have died hereafter. (5.5.17)

Meaning: Lady Macbeth should have died later. It is not *time* for Macbeth to contemplate on her death. 'Time' is the dominant image, as is suggested by *hereafter*. Then, as Reese suggests, the passage is marked with words referring to time: *to-morrow, day, time, yesterdays, hour*.[133] Surely, Macbeth's mind is fully occupied with the oncoming battle with Macduff.

.....There would have been a time for such a word. (5.5.17)

Macbeth could have had patience to receive news of death in the past when, as he thinks, he was less preoccupied. These two lines are time-conscious, the first indicating to the future, and the second indicating to the past. This speech puts forth in clear terms Macbeth's dilemma against the throes of time. He is now living in the present, but this is not the kind of present he wanted to bargain for. While he realises that his today is yesterday's tomorrow, he also happens to travel back in his mind to the days when he was anxious about the future which would be reigned by Banquo's sons. A thornless future was all that he wanted, and paradoxically that future has always proved to be more thorny than ever before.

In this line of thought his next speech is to be examined:

Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow

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[131] Muir, p. 166.
[132] Morris, p. 32.

[133] Reese, p. 369

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." (5.5.18-22)

The phrase "petty pace" means slow but steady progress of time from the past to the present and then into the future. "To the last syllable of recorded time" means the time until the end of the universe (or to the end of human history). The word "fools" means all people, not just fools. That is, whatever we are or whatever we do, all of us are travelling fast to the house of death, while being made fools by it. And, in this respect, death is the great leveller, or to use Hamlet's expression, all of us are food for worms. Cunningham paraphrases Elwin: "Light lights folly on its way to darkness; this is connected with the idea of darkness as a shadow; the living man is the shadow walking between the light and that dusky death to which it is lighting him."[134]

... ... ... Out, out, brief candle. (22)

Candle is the symbol of life, in the sense as it is used in the bed-chamber scene in *Othello*. It is as brief as life is. So, Macbeth wants to stop his life here.

Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more. (23-5)

[134] Muir, p. 153.

Elwin's interpretation is worth mentioning: "Life has only a delusive resemblance to an endurable substance, and the poor player is but the shadow of the substance or reality whose semblance he has assumed."[135]

And, the word 'candle' can be referred to Job, xviii. 6: 'The light shall be darke in his dwelling, and his candle shall be put out with him.' The word 'shadow' also has religious support: Ps., xxxix. 7: 'For man walketh in a vain shadow'; Job, viii. 9: 'For wee are but of yesterday, and are ignorant : for our dayes vpon earth are but a shadow'. The word 'player' has stage reference: in MND., v.i. 213: 'The best in this kind are but shadows'; and MND., v.i.430. Muir quotes Kittredge, "Poor player does not mean a bad actor - or not primarily - but one who is to be pitied because his appearance on the stage of life is so brief."[136]

Thus, as long as life thrives all our actions seem to be nothing but poor, well-rehearsed, limited and monotonous as if we all are puppets, and vanish the moment our allotted time is over. Yet again we see that Macbeth is stressing the shortness of human life in physical terms, though terminologies used are those of religion.

> .....It is a tale
> Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
> Signifying nothing." (25 -7)

Knights writes,

> The theme of the false appearance is revived - with a difference. It is not only that Macbeth sees life as deceitful, but the poetry is so fine that we are almost bullied into accepting an essential ambiguity in the final statement of

[135] Muir, p. 153.
[136] Muir, p. 154.

> the play, as though Shakespeare were expressing his own 'philosophy' in the lines. But the speech is 'placed' by the tendency of the last Act (order emerging from disorder, truth emerging from deceit).[137]

Thus we realise that by the end of the play Macbeth's lesson into the meaninglessness of life is complete. From a normal soldier with a whit of ambition he turned into a hardened sinner, but Shakespeare has used his best dramatic skills to establish Macbeth not as a sinner but as an ambitious soldier making an overbidding. It is never our perception that Macbeth can be hated as much as Iago, neither it is our mood to reject him as an unreproved creature. How Shakespeare has salvaged, all through, the image of Macbeth as a positive character in the minds of the audience is a matter of investigation.

We may note that Shakespeare has preserved our sympathy for Macbeth basically through a two-fold device. He has arranged some of the crucial scenes in such a way that we see Macbeth more as a victim than as a killer, and, secondly, Macbeth's soliloquies are his saving aspect. About the arrangement of the stage-situation, we can point to the scene 2.2. where Macbeth reports to his wife that he has killed Duncan: "I have done the deed" (14). This reporting does not really carry the impact of killing a king, especially in the wake of the two great soliloquies that showed Macbeth to be on the rack. This killing is almost imperceptibly done. The audience is still under the influence of Macbeth's harrowing soliloquies to be fully awake to what really Macbeth has done. To show killing off-stage was almost a common device followed on the Elizabethan stage in order to avoid giving shock to the audience. But here it seems to have occurred from the sense that if Macbeth were really shown as killing Duncan on the stage, thes audience would have reacted negatively. Thus, in the light of the soliloquies that precede the killing, Macbeth adds more to his tortured image, because we remain trapped in his hallucinatory expressions rather than in his action which we have not seen. In the banquet scene, for example, when Macbeth is bedevilled by Banquo's ghost, our sympathy turns more to

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[137] Muir, p. 154.

Macbeth's horrifying condition than to the fact that Banquo was killed by Macbeth, and the latter therefore deserves it. Similarly when Macbeth realises that his hours are on an end, he says, most soldier-like, "At least we will die with harness on our back" (5.5.50). And finally, he desperately but firmly pronounces, "I will not yield / To kiss the ground before young Malcolm's feet" 5.10. 28-9. This recycling to his soldierly image of the first scene also gains our sympathy. We probably do not forget that he is a woman- and child-killer, but because of the stage devices mentioned above our sympathy remains with Macbeth.

But the second aspect of the device is perhaps more effective than the first one. It is concerned with his soliloquies. Reading his soliloquies from a different angle, Honigmann offers the view that there actually emerges a Macbeth who is one image outside, and another image inside. Outside, Macbeth is a tyrant, killer, and an evil figure, but inside, which is exposed through his soliloquies, Macbeth is imaginative, nervous, subtle, farsighted, tormented, consequential, and heroic. If the soliloquies were not present, Macbeth would appear as charmless and unforgivable. Honigmann stresses that

Shakespeare has manipulated our response in such way that we feel that Macbeth's progressive journey into fiendish goals has been modified by his soliloquies which speak about his injured conscience.

> If there is any significance in the Folio's title, The Tragedie of Macbeth, the protagonist's death should certainly bring tragic release. Shakespeare, I believe, steers towards such a response by stressing the external image of the hero, Macbeth as seen by others, and in particular by repeating one word, tyrant, which is used by both Siwards, Macduff and Malcolm: 'Thou liest, abhorred tyrant.' 'Tyrant, show they face!' 'The tyrant's people on both sides do fight .' True as it may be, the external view fails to give the whole truth; and the more Macbeth's enemies insist upon it, the more we are inclined to resist it. Hearing him described as tyrant, usurper, butcher and so on, an audience that has thrilled to a competent actor's rendering of the terrible soliloquies cannot but feel that a man's

> outer life is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying very little, and that the inner life is all in all."[138]

So, about the soliloquies in *Macbeth* it can be said that they have addressed the deeper crises in the characters which are otherwise likely to remain hidden beneath the surface of the drama. For example, if Macbeth had not aired his doubts about the likelihood that his execution of Duncan might backfire, we would not have gauged that Macbeth had such a 'heightened sensibility', nor that he ever had an element called conscience. Thus, in *Macbeth* the soliloquies may be categorised as both expository and exploratory. They expose the inner propensities of Macbeth, and also of Lady Macbeth, and explore the directions that their minds take, and the conclusions thus arrived at are also announced through the soliloquies. For example, Macbeth's ultimate realisation of the futility of the murder is arrived at after he is being disillusioned with the last of the prophecies of the Witches, that is when the Birnam Woods walks down to him, and when at the same time he receives the news of his wife's death. This disappointment calls forth the 'Tomorrow' soliloquy. The point is that if we care to read the progress of his mind from the first soliloquy, that is 'Wouldst . . .' to the last, that is 'Tomorrow', we find that the theme of the last soliloquy is seeded in the first. That is, the very conditional questions of the first soliloquy provide hints to assume that Macbeth's venture is going to be unfruitful, not because that the task in itself is an upheaval job, but because of the enormity of the resistance he is receiving from his conscience. Though Macbeth actually performs the deed, but he *somehow* does it, and throughout the play he remains highly perturbed as to indicate that at the subconscious level of his mind the sense of not wanting to achieve what he has achieved is there. The pattern is one of achievement turning into nullity, thus tenseness and vibrations are the properties of it. The soliloquies weave a chain about this pattern linking the beginning with the end.

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[138] Honigmann, pp. 143–4.

Another point is that what emerges from the soliloquies is the fact that they treat themes which are not only unique to this play but to other plays as well. In *Macbeth* these themes are broadly crime and punishment, conscience and moral justice, and other such concepts played out in turn with subtle variations in each of the other plays. And, again the soliloquies are the means through which such themes integrate with each other, and thus it may be said that the plays *Hamlet*, *Macbeth* and *Othello* build around the soliloquies as our flesh wrap around the spinal cord.

## *Conclusion*

In the previous chapters, while dealing with the soliloquies, we found that we had been analysing them more for their thematic concerns than for their technical aspects. Considering the appropriateness of the soliloquy as a dramatic device, the technical aspects should have dominated our discussion, but they did not, and rather they have come to appear as secondary in importance to the themes that have been discussed. There is a good deal of reason why our discussion veered toward the conceptual analysis rather than to the technical analysis.

One must agree to the fact that though Shakespeare wrote his plays for the stage, where the soliloquies were produced to the maximum dramatic effects - with proper intonation, gesture, and movement, his plays presently are also recognised as significant reading texts, with as much value given to the critical appraisal of the plays *read* as to the assessment of them as the plays *performed*. In this regard, the general assumption may be that the soliloquies can be best discussed in the light of how they have been delivered on the stage throughout the ages, say for example, from the Elizabethan Age until the present time, or from the time of Burbage to the days of Peter Hall, or in films, from Lawrence Olivier to Mel Gibson.[1] But for obvious reasons, mainly, for lack of time and material, such an undertaking was not my aim, and I rather concentrated upon explicating the soliloquies for their dramatic and thematic significances, while considering them as reading texts, not as stage texts. It may be acknowledged that, the verbal elocution of the soliloquy, which is its magical life, and which truly depends on the rise and fall of the actor's voice, on his incantational powers, may have been less attended to in a reading-based study, and thus the evocative power of the soliloquy may not have been as highlighted as it should be, but a close reading of the texts, on the other hand, does not deprive the reader of the right to visualise what he sees in print. And that precisely is

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[1] In fact, while attending a seminar on Shakespeare in Karachi in June, 1996, I talked to Professor Werner Habicht, a prominent German scholar on Shakespeare, about my on-going thesis, and he advised me that it would be better if I could recast my thesis with a view to commenting on how Shakespeare has now been acted in different countries, though he at the same time added that it would need a lot of money to undertake such a project.

what we have tried to do. We have therefore resisted our desire to argue about the technical appropriateness of certain utterances, or about the metrical delicacies and other such things in our discussion, because we thought that in absence of our experience of the plays as stage plays we might have run the risk of making improper judgment on the presentational aspect of the soliloquy; we have, however, not shied away from offering comments on pure technical aspects about which we felt, given our limitations, comfortable enough to do so. In a way, our thesis has recognised the basic deficiency in its work plan, inasmuch as the soliloquy has not been considered from a presentational aspect, but we have tried to indicate that we are not ignorant of this deficiency, and that, there are ways to address the soliloquy with other kinds of significances in mind.

We have observed that the soliloquy is functional on four accounts, which are setting, motivation, manipulation, and ideas. The categorisation however is an imperfect one, because the divisions overlap, and one inheres in the other. They are more supplementary to each other than segregated. But they combine in giving the soliloquy its distinct status.

The setting of a soliloquy may be observed to have been determined by a two-fold necessity. It occurs not only when the actor needs to divulge his feelings, but also when structurally such an occurrence is in order. In the great tragedies discussed, we have observed time and again the exactness of the appearance of a soliloquy. The soliloquy is urgently felt to be divulged, as we have noticed, when the hero is undecided about a future course of action. In *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*, the first and the last plays in our discussion, we see that most of the soliloquies have appeared before the action has proceeded half-way. In these two plays the major soliloquies have already been uttered by the Third Act. In *King Lear* also, before the Third Act is over, the protagonist speaks his soliloquised lines, and in *Othello* only the case differs, as the protagonist speaks his soliloquies at the last stage of the play, though the pattern has still prevailed in the form of Iago's speaking all the soliloquies before the Third Act has passed. However, if the soliloquy is related to a decision to be taken in regard of a vital action, we see that it holds water even in the context of *Othello*. The dominant motivation for Iago's action is to seduce Othello, and he soliloquises until he succeeds in achieving his aim, and,

similarly, since Othello's major action is concerned with his decision to kill Desdemona in the name of justice, he soliloquises until he kills her.

The setting of a soliloquy, therefore, is primarily determined by the character's mental state. It comes when he feels an immense urge to speak out his mind aloud, and looks for an opportunity to deliver one, while the dramatist has also remained watchful that this mental state should also be projected in the most suitable location. Timing, therefore, is very important. The dramatist knows when is the fit time for the actor to deliver the soliloquy. He just does not time it from outward necessities, but from an essentiality which is to be inhered in the mind of the soliloquiser. Thus the setting of the scene is tuned up with the personal necessity of the soliloquiser.

The soliloquies in the major tragedies have been more commendable than those in Shakespeare's other plays, because they are finely integrated with the structure of the plot. The character's need for the soliloquy and the appropriateness of the location are interdependent and form between them an organic whole. Nowhere is this more evident than in *Hamlet*, where the soliloquies occur in a royal setting, where everything apparently seems to be smooth and working, but is rotten underneath. And when Hamlet soliloquises, he seems to be grafting the smoothness of things with the edgy sense that there has to be a rupture somewhere. The soliloquies are sandwiched between two scenes or two aspects of the same scene of contrary nature. They then isolate two scenes opposite in type, or bridge two scenes of similar type, where one may be more tense, and another may be less so. Hamlet's first soliloquy, "O that this too too solid flesh would melt"(1.2.129 ff), is an example in hand. He delivers it just between Claudius's superb handling of the courtly affairs, and Horatio's coming to tell him that they have seen a ghost alike his father. Macbeth's first soliloquy, "If it were done when 'tis done"(1.7.1 ff), is another example. Macbeth delivers this speech, between Duncan's having serenely arrived at his castle, the dinner in his reception having been busily prepared, and his wife's coming and alerting him about the fact that Duncan has finished his supper, and thus is ready to be killed. Thus the serenity created by the presence of Duncan contrasts with the agitation of Lady Macbeth, and the soliloquy produced in between just links up a scene with lower tension and a scene with higher tension. This is also the reason, as we

have pointed out, why Shakespeare takes the help of the soliloquy in order to build up a particular atmosphere. The soliloquy provides him with the particular scope to create a mood or an atmosphere. His poetic genius apart, there was, as we have said before, the absence of technical stage facilities which had forced the dramatist to solely depend on his language to create verbal and mental pictures, through imagery, figures of speech, rhythm and rhetoric. In the absence of covered theatres, background scenery, and artificial lighting systems (keeping the condition of the Globe theatre in mind), the soliloquy became a major means for the dramatist to create an atmosphere appropriate to the character's mood. Creating the nightly scenes through the soliloquy became particularly effective. And in fact the major soliloquies that we have dealt with have taken place during night time. Macbeth and Lady Macbeth do invoke the infernal powers which we naturally associate with the night, and while their expressions are helping to create the nightly atmosphere, they in turn add to the intensification of their diabolic natures. The peculiar beauty of such soliloquies lies in that the signal or signals for the creation of such an atmosphere do fundamentally and almost naturally integrate with the motives of the characters. The stage props often help. We refer to Othello's carrying the taper inside the bedchamber just to indicate both that it is night-time, which is a stage-fact, and that the light he is carrying is also the light of life. Hamlet also sets the night atmosphere when he begins one of his soliloquies as "'tis now the very witching time of night" (1.2.377).

The next question is motivation. There is no lack of motivation for the characters to utter a soliloquy. We have noted that one sixth of all Shakespeare's soliloquies belong to the four great tragedies we have been concerned with. The fact in itself speaks volumes for the assumption that in these plays the soliloquy carries a heavy import so far as the motivation of the charcters is concerned. Our analysis displays that without the soliloquies the central characters we dealt with would have lost much of their reality and effectiveness. The reason is that all of them are possessed with a psychological make-up that does not lend itself to dramatisation through dialogue-situations, or through other devices. And it becomes evident that the hero needs exclusive time of his own to channel

into the soliloquies the enormously deep and varied feelings he has. So the character is motivated to speak alone, producing soliloquies. Hamlet, however, uses soliloquies to misguide us, or to deceive us or to lead us further away from his intentions. The very obvious example is his "To be or not to be" (3.1.58 ff) soliloquy in which he does not air anything about the staging of the play - 'The Murder of Gonzago' - which was the theme of the later part of the previous soliloquy, which just ended only 57 lines before, with the promise that the "play's the thing" with which he will "catch the conscience of the King" (2.2.606-7).

This is how each soliloquy assumes for itself an independent position which does not deny the viability as well as appropriateness of its position in the context and structure of the play, but which nevertheless can air feelings unrelated to the past and future actions. Even though both of Macbeth's early soliloquies - "If it were done when 'tis done" (1.7.1 ff) and "Is this a dagger which I see before me" (2.1.33 ff) respectively - are directly related to his motivation of killing, they are far more intense in respect of gauging the ins and outs of the fact of murder than an ordinary killing would warrant, thus leading us well beyond the consideration of the act as one particular case, and making us realise that a universal issue is involved.

The soliloquies then become the matrix of feelings both particular and universal. The soliloquised part in each play when compared with the rest of the play does evince the fact that the former is meant to be taken and considered as the area in which the dramatist has let his character pour in a wide range of feelings frequently traversed with cross-currents of motives. In this regard Shakespeare has broken new grounds, as he comes away from the traditional practice of using the soliloquy only for passing information, or setting the background, or creating an atmosphere. He rather makes it not only a device to be used conveniently by the dramatist, but also a tool in the hands of the characters who can use it in thinking it out in their own characterstic ways. Such inherence of the soliloquy is a great step forward. For example, when Hamlet delivers his soliloquies he makes them appear not only as a body of speeches which the dramatist has used as a device to further the development of the action, but also as a very useful purpose ready to serve his purpose. We get the impression that Hamlet is carrying with

him a verbal weapon called the soliloquy as regularly as he is carrying a rapier to avenge his father. Hamlet is using the soliloquy as a purse for his heart.

The fact that the soliloquies in the great tragedies are indicative of the characters' multi-layered motives has been pointed out, and that also explains why we have had to refer, perhaps so plentifully, to critics of diverse groups and schools. It hardly needs to say that no amount of study will ever exhaust the critical opus on this body of soliloquies, it is ever growing and as diversified as ever; in our discussion we have frequently made use of the critics' comments to throw light on the diversity of motives as is presented in the soliloquies. The method has been to render the critics' responses in alignment with our own comments to highlight these various motives. Iago is often called motiveless; we have shown how through his soliloquies he actually spells out his motives.

About manipulation we have said that the soliloquies are a great reservoir of insight to become the fulcrum of the charcters. We have said how Macbeth's soliloquies manipulate the audience's response to the orientation of a positive feeling about the character. We have also noted how much evocative have these soliloquies been in the sense that they open up vistas into the subconscious regions of the character, which are vast and infinite and imaginatively very rich. And in fact the soliloquies have been functional in conceiving of images, like Macbeth's 'naked new-born babe' image, that give testimony to the heroes' great imaginative power. Thus, the soliloquy sanitises our attitude to the characters. We have noted, how, particularly in *Macbeth*, the dramatist makes events that might tarnish the image of the hero take place off the stage, and places the soliloquies on stage, so that after hearing them the audience begins to look at the hero more positively, and finds himself willing to condone his crimes. That is, we know that Macbeth is a killer, or so is Othello, but we do not seem to bring ourselves to hate them; we feel shocked for what they have done, but we grow and retain sympathy for them, which is made possible through the manoeuvring of our responses through the soliloquies.

It is, however, the ideas that have been crystallised through the projection of the soliloquies that we would like to talk about, finally. It is, of course, not the custom of criticism to look for the author's philosophy of life in his work, especially when the

author concerned is none but Shakespeare whose versatility of portrayal of human nature, which also accounts for his objectivity, is the most outstanding, and whose treatment of subjects testifies oftener than not the complete immersion of the authorial voice, making it not only difficult even to vaguely suggest that he said this or that about life, or such was his philosophy of life, but also immensely perturbing to try to substantiate a consistent philosophy of life on the basis of his texts. Even then there is a lacuna in this view, because if we can afford to suggest passages from his texts to show as evidence where his poetic hand is most recognisable, if we can refer to certain twists of phrases, or certain patterns of versification as distinctly his, and further, if we can also understand some particular traits as belonging uniquely to his art of characterisation, why cannot we say that Shakespeare might have suggested a consistent philosophy of life also? If his writings are his own, then why would not the messages coming out from his plays be his? Besides, however great, or perfectly objective, or universal the author may be, it is impossible that his work will not be carrying some degree of his own belief about life. Is it possible to imagine Dante or Tolstoy as not having any philosophy of life in relation to their works? Is it also possible to imagine Shakespeare to have said nothing about his own beliefs through the great plays he has written? Is it possible to think that two Shakespeares wrote the plays, and therefore, one would not expect to find in *Hamlet* what he has found in *Lear*, and that there should not be any critical attempt to relate the ideas derived from one play to those of another?

The answer to all these questions is that it is not only possible but also legitimate to find out what philosophy of life Shakespeare broaches in his plays. By this we do not suggest that we should pry into his texts in order to discover in small details what proclivities he had had, or what his tastes were like, or whether he loved or hated dogs, or whether he was indifferent to seeing women as caring, child-raising mothers, and other such thousand details, we mean that his plays do offer us a body of evidences to find out what he thought in general about life and death, about murder and revenge, about crime and punishment, about filial obligation and marital relationship, and about justice and mercy.

So, in the four plays we have been concerned with we see that certain consistency in the development of ideas is noticeable, and that the soliloquies are a helpful means to get to this group of ideas (which can also be considered as his philosophy).

The predominant concern in his great tragedies, to be precise, is the value of human life, first, in relation to his deeds which cause suffering, and, second, in relation to society, nature, and cosmic powers, and, third, in relation to a supreme authority whatever it may be. Shakespeare chooses many themes to focus these relational aspects between man and other beings. The plays we have chosen deal with murder in some form or the other. And, murder as a theme brings in the associated question of revenge, and revenge in its turn calls in the questions of moral responsibility and divine justice.

In our discussion of *Hamlet* we, in trying to explain why Hamlet delays in taking revenge, have said that Hamlet vacillates because, first, he cannot guarantee to himself that the Ghost is an agent from heaven, and, second, he does not feel certain that killing Claudius is the right act. We have, in support of our arguments quoted from two influential critics, namely, Philip Edwards and Eleanor Prosser, the first of whom justifies, basing his argument on the philosophy of Kierkegaard, why Hamlet should doubt the Ghost, and the latter establishes the logic that the convention of revenge, particularly private revenge, was abhorred institutionally. So, in *Hamlet*, Shakespeare may be seen struggling to deal with the problem of revenge in which a murder has to be shown warranted by the words of a supposedly divine Ghost, and that the murder has to appear to look like a sacrifice for divine justice. This nearly makes us uphold the 'conscience theory' which has so vehemently been rejected by the very influential critic, A. C. Bradley. It is really risky to disagree with Bradley, because the perspicuity of this great critic is of such a superior order that our best efforts to counter him is as likely to be dwarfed as Kreo Karadong, the highest peak of Bangladesh, will be dwarfed before the Everest. Still, with much diffidence in heart we would like to pick up the conscience issue again with Bradley as to show that perhaps it can stand on its own. Bradley's main argument is that Hamlet does not mention anywhere in the play that he is finding his conscience to be obstructing his action. He, therefore, is not ready to define the word 'conscience' in "Thus conscience does make cowards of us all" (3.1.85), as having to do

anything with moral scruples, but with consequences, as Hamlet in this soliloquy ( "To be or not to be" ) is concerned with suicide. But, in our discussion, we have shown with the help of critics like Jenkins, that Hamlet does not feel justified on various accounts, conscience being one. The point on which Bradley can very definitely reject the conscience theory is related to Hamlet's duty as laid on him by the Ghost. Bradley says that to believe that Hamlet is feeling constrained by conscience is to accept the fact the Ghost's command carries no value for him whatsoever. Thus, supposing the absurdity of such a proposition he winds up his argument by saying that, as the conventions went, "we are meant in the play to assume that he *ought* to have obeyed the Ghost,"[2] Very succinct argument, but still Bradley can be refuted on this point by the fact that while his study came out before 1904, later studies of the Elizabethan ghosts and revenge conventions, pursued by such authors as Prosser, whom we have substantially used in our discussion, have tended to produce facts in the light of which Bradley's use of the word *ought* in respect of the convention of the Ghost on the stage can be held at the best as only tentatively true. Lily B. Campbell anticipates Prosser in refuting Bradley exactly on the same questions as revenge, and the authenticity of ghosts. She thinks that Bradley has concerned himself too much with the "objectivity of the ghosts," and has ignored the fact that the Elizabethans had believed strongly in the Vindicta Mihi speech ("Vengeance is mine, I will repay").[3] The conclusion that we have drawn is that since Hamlet is enjoined the duty to take revenge, he, in other words, is asked to kill a man, which proves to be a difficult job for reasons we have given above, and also for suggestions held out by the text itself. Moreover, killing a man deliberately under whatever name it goes, is a difficult proposition to materialise at any time at any given moment whatever may be the ambience of culture. We know for sure that the Elizabethan age was far more violent than ours, and that the code of private revenge was actively pursued though banned by

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[2] Bradley, p. 79

[3] Campbell, p. 253. She writes, "There is nothing more certain that the law, the church, the historian, the moralist, and the popular pamphleteer in Elizabethan England were atone in teaching that God had had decreed that "Vengeance is mine," that he would surely exact vengeance for sin, but that he was jealous of his prerogative. To rulers and magistrates he delegated the execution of public justice, but private revenge was forbidden to all and was sure to bring God's vengeance upon anyone engaged upon it, even though the avenger might be used as the instrument of God's vengeance."

law, but that does not mean that everybody at everytime approved of it, or everybody was easily a killer, as it is not true either about our own age that we do abhor revenge, universally. Through *Hamlet*, Shakespeare shows how difficult it is to accommodate the idea of revenge. Throughout the ages of civilisation, the fact of homicide has posed one of the greatest problems to the thinking people. We have no scope to think that Shakespeare would have taken the matter lightly even though he was writing a revenge play for the stage. Thus, if *Hamlet* is treated as the finest play in which the theme of revenge is most exhaustively treated, we see that the dramatist, as he was a genius, did not want to give it a simple treatment, but rather took the opportunity to show all the complications of the idea as elaborately as possible. In doing this, he took recourse to the soliloquies and made them the means for his hero to vent phenomenal arguments about revenge. We have discussed the "To be or not to be soliloquy" (3.1.58 ff) at length, and, commenting that it shows Hamlet's unresolved mind, said that he (Hamlet) therefore takes his accidental return to Denmark as a sign from divinity to go ahead with his revenge. So, Shakespeare clears him up for the killing, but his own doubt about the rightness of the action persists, and therefore he makes the events happen in such a way that it is Claudius who plans to kill him first, and Hamlet kills him only in retaliation, thus exonerating himself of the guilt. Yes, Claudius *should* be killed, but should he be actually killed by another human being? Can one man be allowed to kill another man? The question lingers, and it does not leave Shakespeare's mind. Before he produces his next great tragedy, *Othello*, he has already approached the dilemma about revenge and moral justice in *Measure for Measure*, produced immediately before. In that play, he takes a biblical statement, 'judge not that ye be not judged', as the leit motif, and concretely suggests, through the plights of Angelo, that before you judge somebody you ought to make sure that you would not have committed the same crime, given the opportunity and the circumstances. The obliteration of differences between the justicer and the punished has already been hinted at in *Hamlet*, when he, as Jenkins says, after killing Polonius, becomes the revenger as well as the person to be revenged.[4] The fear that seems to be corroding Shakespeare's heart is that the revenger with a right cause

[4] Jenkins, p. 143.

becomes a killer too, and with that the difference between the two might end. The possibility of such a confusion arising from such dual role is also suggested in *Lear* through the handy-dandy situation, in which Lear prophetically utters: "Hark in thine ear: change places, and handy-dandy, which is the justice, which is the thief" (4.5.148-50)? The sense of obliteration is also given in such expressions as Hamlet's remark that the peasant and the courtier have become the same ("The age is grown so picked that the toe of the peasant comes so near the heel of the courtier he galls his kibe" (5.1.135-8)), or when he explains the process of having the doer suffer for what he has done: "For 'tis the sport to have the engineer / Hoised with his own petard" (3.4.190-1)), anticipating Lear's handy-dandy situation. The process of revenge therefore involves a boomerang pattern, thus making the venture all the more unworthy. In relation to the act of revenge again, the thought that death is the great leveller, thus making the fruits of revenge unsought for, may also have been haunting Shakespeare's mind. Hamlet's observation at the graveyard that death makes a great Alexander or a Caesar so insignificant that even the clay formed out of their consumed bodies can hardly cover a patch against winter ("Imperial Caesar, dead and turned to clay, / Might stop a hole to keep the wind away" (5.1.208-9)), is another lesson Shakespeare wants us to derive. Thus the doubt about the legitimate action against killing is still disturbing Shakespeare's mind, and when he approaches *Othello*, we find him putting the hero debate the same issue in his soliloquy, "It is the cause, it is the cause, my soul" (5.2.1 ff). We have pointed out Othello's misconception that he thinks he can act as the agent for heavenly justice while he is actually killing a human being. We have also drawn on the similarity between Othello and Brutus, who thinks he is justified in killing Caesar as he has become a threat to Roman democracy. Brutus's justification is worth listening to:

> Let's be *sacrificers*, but not butchers, Caius.
> We all stand up against the spirit of Caesar,
> *And in the spirit of men there is no blood.*
> *O, that we then come by Caesar's spirit,*
> *And not dismember Caesar! But, alas,*

> *Caesar must bleed for it*. And, gentle friends,
> Let's kill him boldly, but *not wrathfully.*
> *Let's carve him as a dish fit for the gods,*
> Not hew him as a carcass fit for hounds. (*JC* 2.1.162-74) (Italics mine)

The italicised phrases in the passage show the kind of confusion Brutus has made about the terminology like sacrifice, spirit, and body that work fine as ideals, but when applied to real life need to be more cautiously defined and redefined. While Brutus argues that in killing Caesar's dictatorial spirit, unfortunately Caesar's body too has to be killed, he seems unable to see that it is a human being he is talking about, whom he thinks he is going to make a sacrifice of, as much as Othello thinks that Desdemona has to be sacrificed for the sin of adultery, without verifying the question; while Hamlet does indeed ponder whether he has the authority to act on behalf of the gods.

So, the problem remains. How to kill a human being without being untarnished? We must see the point that in Shakespeare's time the court of law did not operate in the modern sense, though magistracy was active and conducted trials, as we find in *The Merchant of Venice*. In Shakespeare, however, the civil court seems to be inoperative, mainly because his protagonists are all kings, queens, and princes or the similar kind, who by their prerogatives conduct a trial, but do not become the subjects of a trial. And, what respect could Shakespeare have for this civil court is best projected in the mock-trial scene in *King Lear* about which we have spoken a little while ago referring to the handy-dandy position between the justicer and the punished, or, to be more specific, we can refer to his (Lear's) lines that show how verdict is managed in the civil court: "Plate sin with gold, / And the strong lance of justice hurtless breaks" (4.5.161-2). We can also think of Hieronimo's situation in *The Spanish Tragedy*. Despite being the Chief Justice of the land, he cannot take legal action against Lorenzo because he is the King's nephew.

Perhaps, considering the delimiting factors of the civil court, Shakespeare had not even contemplated giving it any major importance, while he was more content taking the problematic issues at a metaphysical level.

In *King Lear*, the problem about the relation between man and the metaphysical power takes on yet another turn. Here Shakespeare makes a more-than-life-size human being confront nature. Lear initially is confused about the storm, he takes it as his ally, but soon his illusion breaks, and he finds himself a pitiful creature in the hands of gods, variously related in the play, the specific one being that as flies to wanton boys so are human beings to gods. Thus, *King Lear* ends with establishing the fact that it is in the feeling of utter humility and act of total submission by man before the powerful forces that true dignity lies: "The gods are just, and of our pleasant vices / Make instruments to plague us" (5.3.161-2).

And that dignity is again put back in *Macbeth* in manifold expressions. As Macbeth, who is a great soldier, decides to kill King Duncan for the throne, so the question again comes back to killing. But this time, the actor hesitates, as does Hamlet, but he hesitates for a short time, and then after the killing his worries increase by leaps and bounds. Here the same question about the value of human life is raised, and through the metaphor of blood, Shakespeare makes it clear to his heroes (the Macbeths) that although what they think is a mere letting out of blood, the stains of which can be washed by water, the actual case is very different because there is conscience that brings up unmanageable consequences, thus making them suffer. So, more than physical obstructions, there is the conscience that does not let up. And the existence of it is the root of all suffering. In pointing out the difference between Hamlet and Macbeth in respect of the committing of murder, we have said that though in one it is an act of revenge and in the other an act of murder, what is in common between them is that both of them are contemplating killing of the king. And, we see Hamlet hesitating, and Macbeth, after a little hesitation, being bolstered up by his wife, doing it. Now, if *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* are seen as corresponding plays to each other in terms of having treated the theme of homicide (or regicide), then we can recognise Shakespeare's mind still struggling to find a way out from having people inevitably killed. Though there is a gulf of difference between Hamlet and Macbeth so far as their mental make-up is concerned, it is nevertheless true that both had been conceived by Shakespeare, so that it is not un-natural that the ideas of the former play should reflect upon those of the latter play. He shows in *Hamlet* the problem of

having to kill a man in the name of revenge. The Hamletean dilemma returns afresh in *Macbeth*. This time Shakespeare changes the fashion and makes the killing happen rather quickly. So, when he makes Macbeth kill, he still gives him the same kind of hesitation that resisted Hamlet from taking action. In order to avoid making Macbeth another procrastinator, Lady Macbeth has to be introduced, without whose presence, as we have noted Peter Hall saying, Macbeth perhaps would not have killed Duncan. However, so long as he finally kills Duncan, the plays' relation with each other increases. If in *Hamlet* Shakespeare had dealt with killing showing that the thought of it brings more dilemma than ever, in *Macbeth* he rectifies it by making the killing early. Then he shows us that the fact of killing itself, whatever name may be given to it, remains a problem for a conscientious mind. It does not matter whether it is done or not, the fact remains that it brings more problems than ever. So, that is the reason, why Macbeth finally ends with the tomorrow speech, encapsulating the frustration lying in wait after every killing.

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