Scaffolds of Treason in *Macbeth*

Rebecca Lemon

Treason plagues *Macbeth* from its opening: by the second scene of the play, the first Thane of Cawdor has betrayed King Duncan, and, by the fourth scene, Malcolm confirms Cawdor's execution for treason. Reporting on the event, Malcolm declares of Cawdor that "very frankly he confess'd his treasons, / Implor'd your Highness' pardon, and set forth / A deep repentance" (1.4.5–7).[1] These lines reveal the dying last words of a traitor, familiar to its Jacobean audience as a monologue spoken from the scaffold by hundreds of prisoners.[2] Such speeches were characterized by a confession of guilt and a prayer to the monarch as illustrated by Cawdor's own words.[3] Recorded in chapbooks, ballads, and state papers, the "scaffold speech" was delivered by prisoners prior to execution, serving as a critical site for the apparent affirmation of the monarch and a re-establishment of communal, public order, as notably argued by Michel Foucault for early modern France, and J. A. Sharpe and Lacey Baldwin Smith for England.[4]

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[1] William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, in *The Arden Shakespeare,* ed. Kenneth Muir (London: Methuen, 1951; reprinted 1984). All citations from the play are to this edition.

[2] The speeches appear individually in contemporary printed matter, and are also catalogued in John Cobbett and William Howell, ed., *Cobbett's Complete Collection of State Trials and Proceedings for High Treason and Other Crimes and Misdemeanors from the Earliest Period to the Present Time*, Vols. 1 and 2 (London: T. C. Hansard, 1809). For other editions containing primary materials on execution, see C. G. L. Du Cann, *English Treason Trials* (London: Frederick Muller Ltd., 1964); Joseph H. Marshburn and Alan R. Velie, *Blood and Knavery: A Collection of English Renaissance Pamphlets and Ballads of Crime and Sin* (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1973); Donald Thomas, ed., *State Trials: Treason and Libel*, Vol. 1 (London: Routledge, and Kegan Paul, 1972).

[3] On the representation of execution in Shakespeare, see Karin S. Coddon, "'Suche Strange Desygns': Madness, Subjectivity, and Treason in *Hamlet* and Elizabethan Culture" in *Case Studies in Contemporary Literature: Hamlet*, ed. Susanne L. Wofford (Boston: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press, 1994), 380–402; Steven Mullaney, *The Place of the Stage: License, Play, and Power in Renaissance England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 111–14.

[4] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Pantheon, 1978); J. A. Sharpe, "'Last Dying Speeches': Religion, Ideology, and Public Execution in Seventeenth-Century England," *Past and Present* 107 (1985): 144–67; Lacey Baldwin Smith, "English Treason Trials and Confessions in the Sixteenth Century," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 15 (1954): 471–98; and Smith, *Treason in Tudor England: Politics and Paranoia* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1986). The

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These speeches were meant to serve a didactic purpose. First, the spectacle of the prisoner on the scaffold itself instructed the audience to avoid such crime and its gruesome punishment. Second, the prisoner's speech often directly admonished the audience not to engage in criminal activity. Cawdor's scaffold speech within *Macbeth* thus serves as a warning within a warning, given that English Renaissance theories of tragedy, offered by writers such as George Puttenham and Sir Philip Sidney, stress the didactic effect of tragedy in cautioning its audience members against crime and tyranny. In his *Defense of Poetry* (c. 1581), for example, Sidney offers a theory of tragedy that, although based primarily on the classical model of Seneca and the contemporary model of *Gorbuduc* (1562), nevertheless both influences and anticipates the tragic playwriting of the next decades. He defines "high and excellent tragedy, that openeth the greatest wounds, and showeth forth the ulcers that are covered with tissue; that maketh kings fear to be tyrants, and tyrants manifest their tyrannical humors."[5] Sidney's theory posits tragedy as the exposure of "wounds" and "ulcers," suggesting that the genre reveals faults in characters in order, in turn, to reveal or prevent such faults in the audience. While the well-known Aristotelian model of tragedy both provokes emotion in the audience and then purges this emotion through catharsis, Sidney's model of tragedy either teaches its audience to avoid vice or exposes those guilty viewers: like Hamlet's mousetrap play, tragedy causes abusive kings to "manifest their tyrannical humors."[6]

On one level, *Macbeth* appears to confirm this exemplary model of tragedy, and indeed the early representation of Cawdor's scaffold speech could be read as a foreshadowing of the events of the play: a hero turns traitor and in dying teaches the audience to avoid his own treachery. Certainly the legend of the play's first performance would support this reading, as critics have long noted. On August 7, 1606, *Macbeth* was allegedly performed before Queen Anne and her visiting brother, King Christian of Denmark, in order to celebrate King James's triumph over the Gunpowder plot traitors.[7] Although the play's role in the royal celebrations that followed the

analyses of Sharpe and Smith, while not directly engaging with the work of Michel Foucault, nevertheless corroborate his argument that execution practices staged an invincible display of state force. Foucault, however, goes on to analyze how the tension of the ceremony occasionally worked against the sovereign; particularly toward the end of the sixteenth century, the audience increasingly rioted at the scaffold spectacle (59–69). On continental execution, see also Lisa Silverman, *Tortured Subjects: Pain, Truth and the Body in Early Modern France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), especially ch. 6; Pieter Spierenburg, *The Spectacle of Suffering* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

[5] Philip Sidney, "The Defence of Poesy" in *Sir Philip Sidney: Selected Prose and Poetry,* ed. Robert Kimbrough (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983), 102–58; 129.

[6] George Puttenham, in *The Arte of English Poesie* (1589), shares Sidney's view of tragedy as educative, writing how "the bad and illawdable parts of all estates and degrees were taxed by the Poets in one sort or an other and those of great Princes by Tragedie in especial, and not till after their deaths . . . to th'intent that such exemplifying (as it were) of their blames and adversities, being now dead, might worke for a secret reprehension to others that were alive, living in the same or like abuses . . ." (D2v).

[7] Scholars continue to debate the occasion of the first performance. See Kenneth Muir, "Introduction," *Macbeth: The Arden Shakespeare,* xv–xxv; Henry Paul, *The Royal Play of Macbeth* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1950), 15–24. On the Gunpowder plot, see Paul Durst, *Intended Treason: What Really Happened in the Gunpowder Plot* (London: W. H. Allen, 1970); Antonia Fraser, *Faith and Treason: The Story of the Gunpowder Plot* (New York: Doubleday, 1996); Alan Haynes, *The Gunpowder Plot: Faith*

plot's discovery may be merely apocryphal, *Macbeth*'s Porter directly refers to one of the plotters, Father Henry Garnet, suggesting that Shakespeare's portrait of treason emerged in part from the contemporary event.[8] As Henry Paul argues in his groundbreaking study *The Royal Play of Macbeth*, the play celebrates James's exposure of the plot, serving as a contemporary compliment to the king and educating audiences in the ideology of legitimate sovereignty. Leonard Tennenhouse also astutely analyzes *Macbeth* as a panegyric celebrating sovereign power, suggesting that Shakespeare "mystifies the notion of kingship, reinvigorates the signs and symbols associated with the exercise of legitimate power, and makes the theatre speak a more conservative ideology."[9]

The spectacle of Macbeth's severed head at the end of the play should serve precisely this didactic purpose, as Marjorie Garber reminds us, since the head will be displayed "[p]ainted upon a pole, and underwrit, / 'Here may you see the tyrant'" (5.8.26–27).[10] She notes how Macbeth "is to become an object lesson, a spectacle, a warning against tyranny." Nevertheless, as Garber herself goes on to argue, his success as an object lesson is complicated by his uncanny role as a type of male Medusa: he is both familiar and monstrous, both male and female.[11] This notion of Macbeth as a figure of inversion and contamination returns us to Sidney's definition of tragedy as a genre that "showeth forth the ulcers." Although he most obviously characterizes the drama as an exemplum, Sidney also suggests how tragedy is a genre that turns things inside out: what should be inside the body spills out for external, public view in the form of an ulcer or wound. Specifically, tragedy externalizes

in Rebellion (Dover: Alan Sutton, 1994); Mark Nicholls, *Investigating Gunpowder Plot* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991).

[8] Scholars cite the equivocation jokes within the Porter's scene as topical references to Father Garnet's infamous equivocation when questioned about his role in the Gunpowder plot. See Philip Caraman, *Henry Garnet 1555–1606 and the Gunpowder Plot* (London: Longmans, 1964); Haynes, *Gunpowder*, 133; Frank L. Huntley, "*Macbeth* and the Background of Jesuitical Equivocation," *PMLA* 79 (1964): 390–400; Muir, "Introduction," xx–xxii; and Garry Wills's important study of *Macbeth* in relation to the Gunpowder plot, *Witches and Jesuits: Shakespeare's Macbeth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995). As a central figure in the English Catholic community and a proponent of equivocation, Garnet was one of the crown's most important prisoners, despite the fact that he played only a minor role in the Gunpowder plot itself. See Henry Garnet, "A Treatise of Equivocation," also published as "A Treatise against Lying and Fraudulent Dissimulation," Bodleian, Laud MS., misc. 655; also edited by David Jardine (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1851).

[9] Leonard Tennenhouse, *Power on Display: The Politics of Shakespeare's Genres* (London: Methuen, 1986), 130; see especially the chapter entitled "The Theater of Punishment: Jacobean Tragedy and the Politics of Misogyny." See also Antonia Fraser, who writes that the play "is a work redolent with outrage at the monstrous upsetting of the natural order, which is brought about when subjects kill their lawful sovereign," *Faith*, 280, and Alvin Kernan's forceful argument, in *Shakespeare, the King's Playwright: Theater in the Stuart Court, 1603–1613* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), that Shakespeare transformed Holinshed "to fit his patron's political myth," creating a story that conveys "a sacred event in the history of divine-right legitimacy" (78).

[10] Marjorie Garber, *Shakespeare's Ghost Writers: Literature as Uncanny Causality* (New York: Methuen, 1987), 87–123; 114, quoted in *Shakespeare's Late Tragedies: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Susanne L. Wofford (Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 1996), 74–103; 98.

[11] See also Janet Adelman, who offers a powerful reading of Duncan's corpse as a Medusa figure in *Suffocating Mothers: Fantasies of Maternal Origin in Shakespeare's Plays, Hamlet to The Tempest* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 133, especially the chapter entitled "Escaping the Matrix: The Construction of Masculinity in *Macbeth* and *Coriolanus*."

inward, transgressive desires for all to see, and this simple mechanism of exposure produces complex results in terms of audience reaction and interpretive possibility. As Steven Mullaney's insightful analysis of the liminal place of the Elizabethan stage demonstrates, the "place of the stage," both geographically, in the liberties of London, and historically, as a newly established site, allows the theatre to examine critically the culture of which it was marginally a part.[12]

This essay focuses on *Macbeth*'s oppositional potential by analyzing Cawdor's execution in the opening scenes as a failure of didacticism, both on the state and theatre scaffolds: the exemplary traitor's speech does not instruct Macbeth to avoid treason but potentially offers him a model, a namesake even, for his own criminal desires.[13] Even before Macbeth's treason, then, Duncan's Scotland reveals, following Jonathan Goldberg's powerful analysis, that "hegemonic control is an impossible dream, a self-defeating fantasy."[14] Not only does Cawdor's execution fail as an educational, hegemonic spectacle, but also, more importantly, the staging of this familiar genre of confession before death complicates the articulation of truth in the play. As a result, the play blends allegedly legitimate sovereignty with treasonous deception, ultimately producing a ruler in Malcolm who combines rather than opposes the knowledge of traitors and monarchs. Wilbur Sanders and, more recently, David Scott Kastan rightly note that Malcolm is a man of "smaller stature" and "reductive vision" in comparison to his father Duncan.[15] He nevertheless represents, I will argue, a model of kingship produced out of Scotland's own fair and foul landscape: Malcolm adopts the villainous characteristics of Macbeth's own reign, employing the deceptive mechanisms typical of traitors in order to rule his kingdom effectively. Despite the deeply illuminating arguments of Janet Adelman and Peter Stallybrass, then, that the promised efficacy of Malcolm's rule emerges out of his association with the reactionary, patriarchal politics of "consolidating male power,"[16] I

[12] Steven Mullaney, *The Place of the Stage.* Although Mullaney argues that the liberty of the theatre to comment on dominant cultures diminishes as it becomes a more permanent feature of the London landscape, his chapter on *Macbeth* nevertheless demonstrates the play's oppositional potential. My analysis of the play is indebted to his own. Subsequent references will be included parenthetically in the text.

[13] I am indebted to those scholars who have analyzed the play's radical potential before me, including Karin S. Coddon, who offers a compelling analysis of madness and treason in "'Unreal Mockery': Unreason and the Problem of Spectacle in *Macbeth*," *ELH* 56 (1989): 485–501; Marjorie Garber, "Macbeth: the Male Medusa"; Jonathan Goldberg, who offers a skillful, Derridean reading of the play in "Speculations: *Macbeth* and Source," *Shakespeare Reproduced: the Text in History and Ideology,* ed. Jean E. Howard and Marion F. O'Connor (London: Methuen, 1987), 242–64; Ned Lukacher, *Daemonic Figures: Shakespeare and the Question of Conscience* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 162–93; Steven Mullaney, "Lying Like Truth: Riddle, Representation, and Treason in Renaissance England," *ELH* 47 (1980): 32–47; 41, reprinted in Wofford, *Shakespeare's Late Tragedies*, 61–73; Christopher Pye, *The Regal Phantasm: Shakespeare and the Politics of Spectacle* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

[14] Goldberg, "Speculations," 244.

[15] Wilbur Sanders, *The Dramatist and the Received Idea* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 258; David Scott Kastan, "Tragic Closure and Tragic Disclosure," *Shakespeare and the Shapes of Time* (London: Macmillan, 1982), 79–101; 95.

[16] Adelman, "Escaping the Matrix," 146; Peter Stallybrass, "*Macbeth* and Witchcraft" in *Focus on Macbeth*, ed. John Russell Brown (London: Routledge, 1982), 189–209; esp. 200–202. For further analysis of the play's gendered outcome, see Frances E. Dolan, *Dangerous Familiars: Representations of Domestic Crime in England, 1550–1700* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 224–30, esp. 229; Carol Thomas

instead propose that the future king's compromised methods attest to the radical, lingering effects of treason even beyond the errant Macbeth's death. Malcolm, as Alan Sinfield persuasively argues, "indicates the circumspection that will prove useful to the lawful good king, as much as to the tyrant."[17] Like Macbeth himself, the future king practices the traitor's arts of deception.

Rather than fulfilling Sidney's definition of exemplary tragedy, which should teach kings to fear tyranny, then, *Macbeth* provocatively illuminates Sidney's view of tragedy as a genre that "showeth forth the ulcers."[18] This contamination of the office of king by the traitor in the course of *Macbeth* exhibits the seepage between opposites in a manner that recalls Sidney's definition. Just as the internal ulcer exposes itself to light, so does the traitor infect the monarchy to the point where the hidden villainy becomes part of the public life of the state. By exhibiting hidden wounds to the public view, by penetrating the boundaries between internal and external, tragic theatre stages an epistemologically and politically unsettling spectacle of infectious boundarylessness that, in the case of *Macbeth*, leaves the audience convinced less of the crown's authority than of the dramatic power of the hero's own original script, a script which defies the scaffold that represents him.

To explore the tragic, political complexity of the scaffold as staged in *Macbeth*, this essay will first discuss the characteristics of historical scaffold speeches in order to elucidate their interpretive complexity. Turning to the episode of Cawdor's execution, I then argue that the duplicitous language at stake in the historical scaffold speech typifies the speech of traitors as represented in *Macbeth*, first in Cawdor's scaffold speech and subsequently in the witches' prophecies. This duplicitous, treasonous language of Macbeth and the witches reappears, I argue, in the mouth of Malcolm, the son of Duncan and legitimate king of Scotland. Examining the representation of Malcolm reveals the interconnection of treason and monarchy: rather than purging Scotland of Macbeth's errant leadership, Malcolm instead adopts the hero's traitorous speech, demonstrating how the linguistic duplicity typical of traitors proves necessary in sustaining Scotland's monarchs as well.

The Scaffold Speeches of Traitors

On June 2, 1572, the popular Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk, was brought to the scaffold for his execution. Guilty of attempting to secure marriage to Mary, Queen of Scots, Norfolk was the first prisoner executed by Elizabeth I. He paid the executioner

Neely, "'Documents in Madness': Reading Madness and Gender in Shakespeare's Tragedies and Early Modern Culture," *Shakespearean Tragedy and Gender*, ed. Shirley Nelson Garner and Madelon Sprengnether (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996).

[17] Alan Sinfield, *Faultlines: Cultural Materialism and the Politics of Dissident Reading* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 95–108; 103, especially the chapter entitled "*Macbeth*: History, Ideology, Intellectuals."

[18] Interpretations of tragedy's radical potential have been presented eloquently by Catherine Belsey, *The Subject of Tragedy: Identity and Difference in Renaissance Drama* (London: Methuen, 1985); Jonathan Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy: Religion, Ideology, and Power in the Drama of Shakespeare and His Contemporaries* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1984) and Franco Moretti, "'A Huge Eclipse': Tragic Form and the Deconsecration of Sovereignty" in *The Forms of Power and the Power of Forms in the English Renaissance*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt, a special edition of *Genre* 15 (Norman: Pilgrim Press, 1982): 7–40.

to help ensure a job well done and offered a repentance speech that twice had to be silenced by the sheriff.[19] According to the account, the Duke proclaimed from a scaffold erected on Tower Hill,

> I do not excuse myself, but I come to discharge my conscience, and to acquit my peers, and not to complain of any injustice, for I have deserved this, and more a great deal, in that I have abused the queen majesty's mercy towards me; whom once again, with hands lifted up, I pray God long to preserve and reign over you.[20]

Here, Norfolk promises to disclose before the audience his immaterial thoughts, to "discharge [his] conscience" in his scaffold speech. Exposing his conscience for the audience, his supposedly authentic revelation has the effect of validating the charge of treason for which he stands accused, as he says, "I have deserved this, and more a great deal," acknowledging the justice of his punishment and absolving the Queen and peers from implication in the violent spectacle. With Elizabeth having abolished the Catholic method of confession in 1563 with the establishment of the Anglican church, the scaffold speech functions as a secular confessional, offering an opportunity for the sinner to "discharge [his] conscience" in order to be forgiven, a point argued by Steven Mullaney in his brief but illuminating analysis of scaffold speeches in relation to *Measure for Measure*: "scaffold confessions were culturally produced and determined manifestations of an effort to secularize and theatricalize confession, to enter it into the repertoire of available forms of ideological control" (*Place*, 112).

The rest of Norfolk's speech exhibits such ideological control as he moves from his opening acknowledgment of the merciful Queen through his own confession of wrongdoing, ending with his final prayer for the monarch: "I pray God long to preserve and reign over you." The formula evident in his dying last words appears in hundreds of speeches from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, each characterized by a confession of wrongdoing, a validation of punishment, and a final prayer to the audience. This pattern, for example, appears in the cases of the traitors associated with the Babington plot, the Essex rebellion, and the Gunpowder plot, three of the most sensational instances of treason in early modern England. Affirming that they have been brought forward to die, prisoners such as Christopher Norton, Thomas Salisbury, and Robert Devereux, the second Earl of Essex, each then announced the justice of their punishments. Norton, executed in 1570, claimed that he was "justly condemned, by the laws of the realm." He then claims, "I acknowledge and confess, my good Lord and Savior, before the Throne of thy majesty, my heinous offence."[21] Likewise, Salisbury, executed in 1586 for his role in the Babington plot, claimed, "I confess that I have deserved Death, and that I have offended her majesty, whom to forgive me I heartily beseech."[22] Finally, Essex too acknowledged his "just punishment" at his execution in 1601, offering a prayer to God: "I humbly beseech my Saviour Christ to be a mediator to the eternall Majestie for my pardon; especially for

[19] See John Guy, *Tudor England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 271–78 for an excellent account of Norfolk's end.

[20] "The Trial of Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk at Tower Hill: Elizabeth I a.d.1572" in Cobbett and Howell, *Cobbett's*, vol. 1, 1032–33.

[21] "The several Confessions of Thomas Norton and Christopher Norton, two of the Northern Rebels, who suffered at Tyburn" (London: William How for Richard Jones); ibid., 1085.

[22] Ibid., 1158–59.

this my last sinne, this great, this bloudie, this crying, this infectious sinne."[23] Each of these prisoners begins with confession of guilt and ends with a plea to God, following the conventional rhetoric that ostensibly convinces the audience of the criminal's wrong-doing while warning them against committing treasonous acts.

The strict conventions of execution speech, as seen in the cases of Norfolk, Norton, Salisbury, and Essex served to validate the crown and control the audience, as historians J. A. Sharpe and Lacey Baldwin Smith have persuasively argued. Sharpe argues, for example, that these speeches were part of a theatre of punishment designed to articulate a set of values prescribed by the Stuart state: gallows speeches "were of obvious advantage to the state and the state church: they legitimized not only the punishment being suffered by the individual felon, but also the whole structure of secular and religious authority."[24] When, for example, the notorious Gunpowder plotter Henry Garnet appeared on the scaffold, he warned the audience against treason, telling his fellow Catholics, "I exhort them all to take heede they enter not into any Treasons, Rebellions, or Insurrections against the King."[25]

Since these speeches ostensibly justified the crown's punishment, not surprisingly they were used as propaganda supporting the crown. Printed with the monarch's permission, and often by his or her printer, traitors' speeches circulated in pamphlets that narrated events from the arraignment of the prisoner to his or her execution, reminding the audience not to sympathize with the traitor. The didactic power of the scaffold speech is put forth in Henry Goodcole's record of the execution of Francis Robinson in 1618. Goodcole's preface states that "dying men's wordes are ever remarkable, and their last deeds memorable for succeeding posterities, by them to be instructed, what vertues or vices they followed and imbraced, and by them to learne to imitate that which was good, and to eschew evill."[26] He defends his own practice of circulating scaffold speeches, insisting on his interest in education over sensation. He is confident that "succeeding posterities" will learn the proper lesson from these prisoners, rather than mistakenly following their corrupt example: they will "imitate that which was good, and to eschew evill."

While the crown or author may have manufactured a prisoner's last words for the purposes of propaganda, a point to which I shall return later, a prisoner may well have uttered a formulaic speech due to a set of political, economic, and spiritual pressures exerted on him during his imprisonment. Rather than capitulating to the crown's version of events out of obedience, he or she may have instead uttered such formulaic words in order to save family members, an estate, or his or her soul. First, the prisoner's family stood to gain economically if he confessed his crime. According to

[23] "Account of the Execution of the Earl of Essex," *State Papers Domestic, Elizabeth I*: 12/278, no. 12 (February 25, 1601). See also the account of his execution in SPD 12/278, nos. 113 and 114.

[24] Sharpe, "Last Dying Speeches," 163.

[25] "A True Relation of all such things as passed at the Execution of M. Garnet, the third of May, anno 1606" in "A True and Perfect Relation of the Whole Proceedings against the late most barbarous traitors" (London: Robert Barker, 1606), sig. Fff3v.

[26] "A True Declaration of the Happy Conversion, Contrition and Christian Preparation of Francis Robinson, Gentleman. Who for Counterfeiting the Great Seale of England was Drawen, Hang'd and Quartered at Charing Crosse, on Friday Last, being the Thirteenth Day of November, 1618" (London, 1618), sig. A4r. For a mention of Francis Robinson, see Sharpe, "Last Dying Speeches," 150.

the statute law, the sentence for treason included forfeiture of the prisoner's entire estate to the crown, which meant that the prisoner's wife and children were deprived of their land, house, and any of their belongings.[27] Since a woman's estate went to her husband upon marriage, she would become destitute if her husband were sentenced with treason. The crown, however, occasionally returned the wife's jointure to the family. This possibility effectively forced the prisoner to comply with the crown's judgment in the hopes of securing the estate for his surviving family. Before his execution for treason, for example, Gunpowder plotter Ambrose Ruckwood offered the conventional formula of confession, apology, and prayer, and he ended his speech by "beseeching the King to bee good to his wife and children."[28] Likewise, Everard Digby also requested "that his wife might have her jointer, his children the lands intailed, by his father; his sisters their legasies in his hand unpaid."[29]

In addition to the economic pressure exerted on the prisoner, he would also experience spiritual pressure to deliver a conventional scaffold speech. Once in prison, he would receive visits from Anglican ministers intent on tending to the state of his soul. In a culture committed to the Christian belief in the afterlife, the confession of sins and expression of penitence were vital to gaining salvation after death. Shakespeare's Hamlet grieves that Claudius "took my father grossly, full of bread, / With all his crimes broad blown, as flush as May" (3.3.80–81), and he acknowledges that if he killed Claudius at prayer, he would "this same villain send / To heaven" (77–78).[30] Hamlet expresses the cultural belief that, in order to cleanse the soul of sins and ascend to heaven, a dying man must indicate penitence. Even if the prisoner did not share the Anglican belief in penitence and salvation, he had little to lose in expressing his contrition on the scaffold and rarely did a prisoner fail to offer a prayer.[31]

Finally, such religious pressure helps account for the utter conventionality of these speeches, since the long tradition of the *ars moriendi* helped prisoners to shape their deaths according to a model of penitence. The prayer reveals the prisoner's contrition before God, and hence his potential for salvation ("that my soule may be lifted uppe by faith"), a formula that evokes the *ars moriendi*, found in such devotional texts such as William Perkin's *Salve for a Sicke Man* (1595) and Christopher Sutton's *Disce Mori* (1600). Salvation comes as a result of penitence; as Thomas Becon writes in the popular text *The Sicke Manne's Salve* (1561), God will forgive any sinner: "we behold His tender

[27] Edward III had defined treason and its punishment in 1352, in a statute that served as the basis for early modern statutes on treason. See 25 Edw. III st.5 c.2, cited in *Statutes of the Realm*, Volume I (Record Commission, 1810–28), 319–20. On treason law, see John Bellamy, *The Tudor Law of Treason* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979).

[28] "The Araignement and Execution of the late Traytors" (London: Jeffrey Chorlton, 1606), sig. C3r. The Folger Shakespeare Library copy of the pamphlet contains a signature of "Wilbury Shakespeare" on the title page.

[29] Ibid., sig. B4r.

[30] William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, in *The Arden Shakespeare*, ed. Harold Jenkins (London: Methuen, 1982; reprinted 1984).

[31] The form of his spiritual contrition, however, could break convention and provoke the audience, as in the case of Catholic prisoners who uttered prayers while making the sign of the cross. The Catholic prayers of Gunpowder plotter Sir Everard Digby were condemned by the pamphleteer who recorded the incident as "vain and superstitious crossing" in "The Araignement and Execution of the late Traytors."

mercy and loving kindnes toward penitent synners, and howe ready he is to forgeve, whansoever we tourne unto him."[32] The body of the dying criminal, despite its villainy, cannot prevent its penitent soul from reaching heaven, and this enables the prisoner to prompt his own spiritual ascension, making the scaffold a site of religious faith. As a stage on which both secular punishment and Christian promise are performed, the scaffold witnesses the prisoner physically destroyed by earthly authority while potentially ascending to heaven.

These political, economic, and spiritual pressures served in a large part to ensure that scaffold speeches conformed to the formula of confession, apology, and prayer. Yet, the utterly formulaic quality of such speeches could have raised doubts among the audience members as to their authenticity. Since the audience would be aware of the social pressures surrounding the prisoner on the scaffold, they might question the sincerity of the prisoner's highly formulaic language, understanding his performance on the scaffold as a false repentance born of a sincere desire to protect his family. As condemned subjects endlessly performed the same role on the scaffold, the crowd's faith in the authenticity of each confession may well have dwindled. Scaffold speeches are therefore problematic, not only because of their use as propaganda but also because the insincerity of the confession could be patently obvious to an audience. While the speeches may appear to reconstitute monarchical power, then, in the case of the scaffold genre a significant gap exists between the mouthing of the scaffold conventions and a full confirmation of the crown's position.

Indeed, early modern pamphleteers occasionally voice suspicions about the authenticity of scaffold speeches. In "A True and Perfect Relation of the Whole Proceedings against the late most barbarous Traitors" (1606), for example, the author reports a phrase of Sir Edward Coke's, made at the arraignment of the Gunpowder plotters: "true repentance is indeed never too late: but late repentance is seldome found true."[33] Coke's pithy saying, which may have been a common expression, draws into question the sincerity of a prisoner's eleventh hour confession and prayer on the scaffold. His doubt about the authenticity of scaffold repentances mirrors that of the author F.W., who condemns the prisoner Ambrose Ruckwood for insincerity in "The Araignement and Execution of the late Traytors," a pamphlet circulated after the Gunpowder plot. The author claims that Ruckwood "out of a studied speech would faine have made his bringing uppe and breeding in idolatrie, to have been some excuse to his villanie, but a faire talke, could not helpe a fowle deed."[34] He condemns Ruckwood's speech as

[32] Fol. 229. Quoted in Nancy Lee Beaty, *The Craft of Dying: A Study in the Literary Tradition of the Ars Moriendi in England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), 121. See also *Ars moriendi* (ca. 1450); *The Craft to Live and Die Well* (1505); Frances M. M. Comper, ed., *The Book of the Craft of Dying, and Other Early English Tracts Concerning Death* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1917), 5–6; Clare Gittings, *Death, Burial, and the Individual in Early Modern England* (London: Croom Helm, 1984); Sister Mary Catharine O'Conner, *The Art of Dying Well: The Development of the Ars Moriendi* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1942). For readings of the *ars moriendi* in Shakespeare, see Harry Berger Jr., "*Ars Moriendi* in Progress, or John of Gaunt and the Practice of Strategic Dying," *The Yale Journal of Criticism: Interpretation in the Humanities* 1.1 (1987): 39–67; Duncan Harris, "Tombs, Guidebooks and Shakespearean Drama: Death in the Renaissance," *Mosaic* 15.1 (1982): 23.

[33] "A True and Perfect Relation of the Whole Proceedings against the late most barbarous Traitors" (London: Robert Barker, 1606), sig. K2v.

[34] "The Araignement and Execution of the late Traytors," sig. B4r.

"studied," a term that suggests that the speech is a fictional expression akin to the memorized speech of an actor on stage. Such "faire talke" does not impress the author, who reminds his readers of Ruckwood's "fowle deed."

As well as questioning the sincerity of formulaic repentance, these pamphleteers may have occasionally fabricated a prisoner's dying words. Given the propagandistic value of such pamphlets in justifying the crown's case, the authors would themselves have experienced pressure to record speeches according to the conventional formula. In an account of the scaffold speech of Henry Cuffe, executed in March 1601 for his role in the Essex rebellion, for example, the author condemns the prisoner for refusing to repent, only to report his utterly conventional final words on the scaffold. Cuffe initially reiterates his innocence on the scaffold, claiming, "I do here call God, his angels, and my own conscience to witness, that I was not in the least concerned therein, but was shut up that whole day within the house, where I spent time in very melancholy reflections." Despite Cuffe's self-defense, however, the account, switching to third person, then records that he "began to apply himself to his devotions, which he managed with a great deal of furvour, and then making a solemn profession of his Creed, and asking pardon of God and the queen, he was dispatched by the executioner."[35] Similarly, in an account of the Gunpowder plot traitors, the author F.W. tells his readers that the prisoners "seemed to feele no part of feare, either of the wrath of God, the doome of Justice, or the shame of sinne; but as it were with seared Consciences, senceles of grace, lived, as not looking to die."[36] The prisoners "tooke Tabacco out of measure" and generally expressed little concern for their treason. When brought to court, they continued to be insolent, "craving mercy of neyther God nor the king for their offences" (sig. B3r–v). Yet F.W. reports that, on the scaffold, Edward Digby and Francis Bates asked forgiveness "of God, of the king, and the whole kingdom" (sig. C1r; C2r). The discrepancy between the prisoners's indifference or claims of innocence in jail and their subsequent repentance on the scaffold may have raised doubts in the reader's mind about the pamphlet's accuracy, since the author manages both to condemn the obstinacy of the men and to confirm their guilt through their own scaffold confessions.

The accounts of the Essex rebellion and the Gunpowder plot acknowledge the frequent opposition of sinful deeds and pious speech: as F.W. claims above, "faire talke could not help a fowle deed." Explicitly demonstrating that a reported speech might be insincere, delivered by a prisoner concerned for his family's welfare, these pamphlets question the very formulaic, artful language that is the stock and trade of their own profession. These pamphleteers, then, implicitly suggest that their own reports, like the speeches themselves, might also be fabricated for propaganda purposes. If such speeches were meant to instruct the audience to avoid vice and to fear sovereign authority, the reports convey these formulaic, repentant dying words with the recognition that they are a convenient fiction. This sense of the scaffold speech as a fiction pushes on the vital work of Mullaney, who stresses the opposition of the state and theatre scaffolds. According to Mullaney, the last dying speech is "an

[35] Cobbett and Howell, *Cobbett's*, vol. 1, 1413.

[36] "Araignement and Execution," sig. B2v. Subsequent references will be included parenthetically in the text.

exemplary manifestation of the power of the state to foster internalized obedience even among its most retrograde members," while the "power of the stage was precisely the power of fiction" (112–13). Yet the scaffold speech, as I argue above, is itself a powerful fiction. Aware of audience skepticism, the pamphleteers nevertheless practiced their trade under the encouragement of an avid reader who may have been the only audience member willing to mistake the fiction for reality: the crown itself. Attempting to rely on the illusory sincerity of the speech to validate its punishment, the crown's scaffold instead produced a spectacle of physical violence and interpretive riddles, uncomfortably mingling "fowle" and "faire" in a manner that recalls the foggy heath of the witches in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*.

Interpreting Cawdor's Scaffold Speech

The witches' phrase in the first scene of *Macbeth* famously announces the play's interpretive ambiguity in terms that match F.W.'s condemnation of Ruckwood: "Fair is foul, and foul is fair: / Hover through the fog and filthy air" (1.1.11–12).[37] The play's next scenes, alternating between Duncan's bloody battlefield and the witches' foggy heath, swiftly confirm this interpenetration of foul and fair by presenting two treasonous spectacles: the treachery of the Thane of Cawdor, which Rosse reports to Duncan in scene two, and the witches' seditious prophecies to Macbeth in scene three.[38] In both cases, fair news accompanies foul deeds or desires: first, the triumph of Scotland against Norway comes with the announcement of the first Thane of Cawdor's treason; second, the promotion of Macbeth to Thane of Cawdor provokes the birth of his treasonous desire. As Macbeth asks himself on hearing the witches' prophecy, "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?" (1.3.134–37).

The play powerfully establishes the parallelism between the heath and battlefield: in both sets of scenes, an onstage audience of two noblemen struggle to comprehend treasonous language. In one instance, Banquo and Macbeth hear the witches' prophecies, and in the other, Duncan and Malcolm respond to the report of Cawdor's treachery. While the witches' words provoke the birth of treason in Macbeth, however, Cawdor's scaffold speech presents the other end of the trajectory, reporting the voice of the condemned traitor. Having seen Macbeth lured by "instruments of darkness," we now witness the first Cawdor denouncing his treasonous acts in a conventional, didactic speech. Malcolm announces Cawdor's death to his father,

[37] For an analysis of the demonic onstage in *Macbeth*, see Stephen Greenblatt, "Shakespeare Bewitched" in *New Historical Literary Study: Essays on Reproducing Texts, Representing History*, ed. Jeffrey N. Cox and Larry J. Reynolds (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 108–35. See also B. J. Sokol, "*Macbeth* and the Social History of Witchcraft," *The Shakespeare Yearbook* 6 (1996): 245–74.

[38] Early modern law condemned the prophecy of a sovereign's death as treason since, according to 25 Edw. III, st.5 c.2 and Eliz. I, c.1, it was to "imagine . . . bodily harme to the King or Queene or heires apparent" or "deprive them of the dignity, title, or name of their royal estates." Cited in *Statutes of the Realm*, Vol. 1 (Record Commission, 1810–28), 319–20; and in "An Exposition of Certain Difficult and obscure words and terms of the Lawes of this Realme" (London: 1592).

> I have spoke
> With one that saw him die: who did report,
> That very frankly he confess'd his treasons,
> Implor'd your Highness' pardon, and set forth
> A deep repentance. Nothing in his life
> Became him like the leaving it: he died
> As one that had been studied in his death
> To throw away the dearest thing he ow'd
> As 'twere a careless trifle.
>
> [1.4. 3–11]

According to Malcolm's report, Cawdor's final words consist of his confession of treason, his plea to the monarch and his repentant prayer. The precise correspondence of Cawdor's lines with extant speeches of historical traitors and the wide circulation of the speeches in pamphlets strongly suggest that Shakespeare, a dramatist intimate with the art of public speech, relied on such material in depicting Cawdor's last moments. This episode with Cawdor has received limited critical attention, however, possibly because scholars concur on its dramatic function: it foreshadows Macbeth's later treason in granting him the traitor Cawdor's title, and it alerts the audience to the accuracy of at least part of the witches' prophecy in the following scene, where they hail Macbeth as the Thane of Cawdor. While these lines may not strike a modern audience as problematic, this scaffold speech presented Shakespeare's contemporary audience with a familiar, yet complex, genre. Karin S. Coddon has helped illuminate the scene's interpretive richness; she argues that Cawdor's reported lines "paint a typical enough tableau, but it is ironized both by its narrative prematurity and by the fact that the new Thane of Cawdor is already contemplating treason."[39] Such formulaic repentance, she argues, should accompany tragic closure, rather than occurring in the play's first scene.

Indeed, Malcolm's report acknowledges the interpretive challenge of Cawdor's model repentance. Despite the "frankness" of Cawdor's speech, Malcolm expresses his reservation at the traitor's performance. Malcolm's first line, "[n]othing in his life became him like the leaving it," dances between disdain and compliment for the traitor. Although he wryly dismisses the traitor, suggesting that death suits the treacherous Cawdor more than life ever did, he equally implies that the traitor earned an unprecedented glory in his final moment, making it the greatest achievement in his life. Malcolm maintains this tenuous balance between praise and contempt for Cawdor in his next line: "he died / As one that had been studied in his death." Expressed through a simile, the line compares Cawdor's end to a stock death, "one that had been studied," suggesting that the traitor appropriately prepared himself according to the tradition of the *ars moriendi*. The phrase "studied in his death" equally implies, however, an artful, or dissembling end, one of mouthing forms without belief, as F.W. suggests in his report of Ruckwood's death analyzed above. The use of "studied" in Malcolm's phrase could insinuate an even less favorable portrait if we

[39] Coddon, "'Unreal Mockery': Unreason and the Problem of Spectacle in *Macbeth*," 494. On Cawdor's speech, see also Henry N. Paul, *The Royal Play of Macbeth*, 233 and George Steevens, quoted in *A New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare: Macbeth*, ed. Horace Howard J. Furness (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1963), both of whom briefly compare the dying speech of Cawdor to that of Robert Devereux, the second Earl of Essex.

interpret the following line "the dearest thing he ow'd" not as the body but instead as the soul, as suggested by Kenneth Muir.[40]

The conventional scaffold speech should educate the audience away from treason, but Cawdor's speech instead defies easy characterization since Malcolm appears to question the sincerity of the prisoner's "studied" lines. Further, when considered in light of early modern scaffold speech pamphlets, such a formulaic account raises doubts about the authenticity of the report itself. If such dying last words pamphlets elicited skepticism from their readership, then Malcolm's report may have provoked equal suspicion from the theatre audience. Like a pamphleteer, Malcolm demonstrates his ability to manipulate language, creating a convenient fiction for the benefit of the crown, a point to which I shall return below.

If Malcolm's report on the execution highlights the insidious power of treason to confuse truthful speech and "studied" falsehood, then Duncan is perhaps the only viewer who fails to learn this lesson. In response to the report, the king offers a short commentary, laced with dramatic irony as many critics have noted: "There's no art / To find the mind's construction in the face: / He was a gentleman on whom I built / An absolute trust—[Enter Macbeth . . .]" (1.4.11–14). Unable to detect the "mind" in the "face," the king becomes a victim of Macbeth's false hospitality at Inverness where he is murdered. On one level, Duncan here serves as a symbol of untarnished monarchy, unable to see, and therefore untainted by, treason.[41] The play appears to reinforce Duncan's sanctified rule by highlighting his baffled response to Cawdor's treason, in contrast to the ambitious Macbeths: in the scene after Cawdor's execution, and immediately following Macbeth's promotion, Lady Macbeth recommends the treasonous duplicity between "mind" and "face" to her husband, urging him to "[o]nly look up clear" as he welcomes, and contemplates killing, Duncan (1.5.71). While Duncan's "gentle senses" (1.6.3) celebrate the sweet air at Inverness, Lady Macbeth summons an atmosphere of "thick Night," filled with the "dunnest smoke of Hell" (1.5.50–51), anticipating Macbeth's own "Come, seeling Night" speech (3.2.46–55). In its portrait of the Macbeths, the play thus rehearses the most sensational portraits of treason, familiar from propagandistic texts such as Anthony Munday's "The Downfall of Robert, Earl of Huntington" (1601) in which he writes "Muffle the eye of day, / Ye gloomie clouds (the darker than my deedes, / That darker be than pitchie sable night)."[42] Munday's depiction of treason anticipates Shakespeare's Macbeths, sketching an atmosphere in which the secretive, murderous criminal threatens the innocent monarch.

The play's apparently stark opposition between the legitimate kingship of Duncan and the murderous usurpation of Macbeth has helped, however, to mask the ways in which the play questions the propagandistic portrait of treason's horror. First, the opening scenes of the play expose Duncan's political ineptitude, borne of his inability

[40] Kenneth Muir, "Image and Symbol in *Macbeth*," *Shakespeare Survey* 19 (1966): 45–54. Also see Roy Walker, *The Time is Free: A Study of Macbeth* (London: Andrew Dakers, 1949), 23, who compares the phrase "the dearest thing" to the phrase "eternal jewel" from 3.1.67.

[41] I am grateful to Susanne L. Wofford for help with this point.

[42] "The Downfall of Robert, Earl of Huntington" (London: R. Bradock, 1601). See Kenneth Muir, Arden edition of *Macbeth*, 30–31.

to read the political landscape that surrounds him.[43] Although it may be objected that Duncan's struggle with treason does not suggest his inadequate leadership but instead the fallen state of Macbeth's Scotland, such an emphasis on Macbeth as the sole source of treason ignores the political turmoil that opens the play: at war with Norway, the Scottish troops have only recently succeeded in freeing Malcolm from captivity (1.2.4–5). Further, Harry Berger reminds us that by the fourth scene of the play Duncan has encountered two rebels, and these facts "have to be set against the persistent praise of Duncan as an ideal king, the head of a harmonious state."[44] Furthermore, as Jonathan Goldberg argues, while Duncan's language may appear to support the play's propagandistic opposition of sovereign and traitor, his lines find their source in Holinshed's witches; as a result, he claims, "the absolute differences and moral clarity that critics have found to be Shakespeare's are [instead] . . . Duncan's."[45]

Duncan appears even more culpable if we consider, following the example of the scaffold speech pamphlets, that Malcolm's report itself may be a fabrication. If pamphleteers sought royal license and approval by producing the speeches of penitent traitors, then the very spectacle that should help reassert royal authority over the crown's subjects instead serves the opposite function: the subjects, in this case the pamphleteers, reassure the crown of its own authority through an arguably fictional genre. Duncan, a king threatened by treason from within and rebellion from without, attempts to reestablish his own political authority through his swift execution of Cawdor. Instead, not only does Cawdor's execution provoke Macbeth's treason, but it also exhibits Duncan's excessive dependence on his loyal subjects, including Rosse, who informs him of Cawdor's treason, and Malcolm who informs him of the execution. Rather than leading his subjects, Duncan, as Berger so persuasively argues, is continually in their debt, as when he proclaims to Macbeth immediately after the execution of Cawdor, "more is thy due than more than all can pay" (1.4.21). Rather than protecting his country, Duncan himself requires protection, and Malcolm's comforting but arguably fictive report of Cawdor's death only further highlights the king's heavy dependence on his own subjects.

[43] The example of William Parry's attempted treason against Elizabeth helps verify the association of monarchical authority with exposing 'the mind in the face,' further suggesting Duncan's inadequacy. Parry had conspired with Mary, Queen of Scots to assassinate Elizabeth in 1585, yet finding himself alone with the Queen, rather than murdering her as he had planned, he instead confessed his plot, perhaps under the mistaken assumption that he might receive a reward. See Raphael Holinshed, *Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland* (London: J. Johnson, 1807–8) Vol. 4: 561–63; Guy, *Tudor England*, 332, 444; Wallace MacCaffrey, *Elizabeth I* (New York: Edward Arnold, 1993), 344.

[44] Harry Berger, Jr., "The Early Scenes of *Macbeth*: Preface to a New Interpretation," *ELH* 47 (1980): 1–31; 4. See also his "Text against Performance in Shakespeare: The Example of *Macbeth*" in *The Forms of Power in the English Renaissance*, 49–79.

[45] Goldberg, "Speculations," 249. On Duncan's faults, see also Michael Hawkins, "History, Politics and *Macbeth*," 155–87 who notes that "many of the attributes ascribed to Duncan have a questionable double edge in a king" (173) and David Norbrook, "*Macbeth* and the Politics of Historiography" in *Politics of Discourse: The Literature and History of Seventeenth-Century England,* ed. Kevin Sharpe and Steven N. Zwicker (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 78–116, who writes that "Duncan is no very impressive judge of character" (94). Subsequent references to Norbrook will be included parenthetically in the text.

"I Am as I Have Spoken": Malcolm's Sovereignty

While Cawdor's execution infects truthful speech in the early scenes of the play, it is the portrait of Malcolm that reinforces such linguistic and political contamination in the final act. Specifically, as I shall suggest, Malcolm's emergent leadership owes more to the deceitful tactics of Cawdor and Macbeth than to his vulnerable father's example. First, Malcolm's revolt against Macbeth is of questionable legitimacy, a point illuminated more clearly in Shakespeare's historical sources than in his play.[46] On one level, as both the nominated Prince of Cumberland and Duncan's son, Malcolm appears to satisfy two systems of inheritance: tanistry, the traditional, Scottish system of indirect inheritance, and primogeniture, the newer system based on direct succession. Yet in nominating Malcolm as Prince of Cumberland, Duncan ignores Macbeth's equal claim to the throne through indirect succession, thereby complicating issues of legitimate inheritance in the play; as David Norbrook argues: "there were still noblemen whose allegiance was to the older system according to which Macbeth, son of Malcolm's other daughter, would have had a strong claim" (88). In the case of Shakespeare's play, Norbrook notes that "[i]f Duncan has to nominate his son, presumably the implication is that he could have nominated someone else, that the system is not one of pure primogeniture" (94). Further, as both Michael Hawkins and David Scott Kastan perceptively maintain, despite Macbeth's usurpation of the crown, he nevertheless reigns as an anointed king and thus Malcolm remains bound to obey his rule. The doctrine of non-resistance, upheld by James himself in *The Trew Law of Free Monarchies* (1598), forbids rebellion: "the wickednesse therefore of the King can never make them that are ordained to be judged by him, to become his judges."[47]

Malcolm, then, arguably emerges as a Cawdor and Macbeth figure himself. Most obviously, according to the doctrine of non-resistance, he treasonously attacks a legitimate monarch. Yet, the play occludes this issue in depicting his rebellion. Instead, Malcolm's role as a Cawdor figure develops more subtly: in each of Malcolm's appearances between his father's murder and his own ascension as king, he increasingly exploits the opposition of "mind" and "face" so that, like Macbeth, he deceives his audiences onstage in order to protect himself and eventually gain the throne. First, immediately after his father's murder he separates speech from sincerity, claiming that "[t]o show an unfelt sorrow is an office / Which the false man does easy" (2.3.134–35). His connection of performance ("to show") and falsity ("unfelt sorrow") recalls his ambiguous attitude toward Cawdor's studied speech, since in both cases he retains a skeptical distance from sirenic speech. While Macbeth openly, and deceptively, laments the king's death, Malcolm and Donalbain remain silent, causing Malcolm to ask his brother in an aside, "Why do we hold our tongues, that most may claim / This argument for ours?" (2.3.118–19). The image of the held, or controlled, tongue

[46] On the relationship between Shakespeare's play and historical accounts such as Holinshed and Buchanan, see, for example, the illuminating analyses of Norbrook (ibid.) and Arthur F. Kinney, "Scottish History, The Union of the Crowns, and the Issue of Right Rule: The Case of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*" in *Renaissance Culture in Context*, ed. Jean R. Brink and William F. Gentrup (Aldershot: The Scolar Press, 1993), 21.

[47] *The Trew Law* (Edinburgh, 1598). See also Hawkins, "History," 177 and David Scott Kastan's insightful reading of the play, which notes the doubling of the Norwegian rebellion that opens the play in Malcolm's rebellion in the final act in *Shakespeare After Theory* (London: Routledge, 1999), 177.

powerfully contrasts with the overflow of the scene, occurring at the level both of the body, seen in Duncan's blood and Lady Macbeth's emotion, and of the tongue itself, evident in the cries of Macduff and the Macbeths. Malcolm's initial image of the held tongue could stand as a symbol for the virginal prince who is, as Janet Adelman has noted in her influential reading of the representation of masculine power in the play, "yet / Unknown to women" (4.3.125–26).[48]

Initially questioning the association of speech and sincerity, Malcolm then begins to exploit the duplicitous potential of language as he establishes his allies in the fight against Macbeth. His exchange with Macduff in 4.3 most clearly reveals this linguistic deception; here, as Norbrook persuasively argues of Malcolm, "[p]aradoxically, it is only by modeling himself on Macbeth's own strategies of dissimulation (4.3.117–19) that he can prove Macduff's virtue" (111). Characterizing himself to Macduff as an uncontrolled libertine who would "pour the sweet milk of concord into Hell" (98), Malcolm claims that his own vices are so heinous that "when they shall be open'd, black Macbeth / Will seem as pure as snow" (52–53). He ends his list of multitudinous sins by insisting to Macduff's disbelief, "I am as I have spoken" (102). Malcolm's self-characterization directly contradicts his own behavior in the play (he is a man who is known more through silence than speech), inverting his identity in a manner parallel to the equation plaguing Scotland: "fair is foul and foul is fair." His own statement "I am as I have spoken" ironically recalls Duncan's belief in authentic speech, invoking the earlier faith in the correspondence of speech and intent as a ruse to expose deceit.[49]

Finally, having manipulated his audience through false speech, Malcolm ends by tricking Macbeth's troops with his illusionist battle tactics. According to the witches' prophecy, Macbeth is safe "until / Great Birnam wood to high Dunsinane hill / Shall come against him" (4.1.92–94). Such a statement reassures Macbeth, who cannot imagine this geographical impossibility: "That will never be: / Who can impress the forest; bid the tree / Unfix his earth-bound root?" (94–96). By the next act, however, we learn that it is Malcolm who "can impress the forest" and "bid the tree / Unfix" its root when he tells his troops, "Let every soldier hew him down a bough, / And bear't before him: thereby shall we shadow / The numbers of our host" (5.4.4–6). While Malcolm is ignorant of the witches' speech to Macbeth, his command nevertheless fulfills their prophecy. In attempting to "shadow / The numbers," he implements devious tactics in order to conquer treason, since he, like the Macbeths, proves willing to haunt the darkened shadows in order to obtain royal power.

Using deception to test Macduff's loyalty and triumph over Macbeth, Malcolm adopts the traitor's art. Ironically, while the Macbeths began the play by using language as a medium through which to deceive Duncan, as the play continues they increasingly betray themselves by speaking frankly of their treasons. Macbeth unwittingly discloses his murder of Duncan and Banquo to his nobles in the banquet scene,

[48] Janet Adelman, "Escaping the Matrix," 144–46.

[49] While the scene with Macduff has been characterized as a perfunctory paraphrase from Holinshed, Marvin Rosenberg has reminded us of the theatrical success of this suspenseful scene, particularly for spectators who do not know the outcome in advance; see *The Masks of Macbeth* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 543. On the relationship between the texts of Shakespeare and Holinshed, see also Goldberg, "Speculations"; Hawkins, "History"; and Norbrook, "*Macbeth*."

and Lady Macbeth famously confesses her crimes to her doctor and maid while sleepwalking. Further, unable or unwilling to recognize the witches' prophecies as misleading half-truths, Macbeth desperately clings to their speeches as authentic statements about his future, repeating "I will not be afraid of death and bane, / Till Birnam forest come to Dunsinane" as a means of consoling himself (5.3.59–60; see also 1–10). If Macbeth's demise comes in part from his unwillingness to recognize the witches' prophecies as riddles, Malcolm acknowledges and employs the riddles of language, both in the opening scene where, as I have argued, he highlights the indecipherability of Cawdor's dying words, and in the closing scenes with Macduff.

As well as exposing Malcolm's use of arguably treasonous deception in gaining the throne, the play also reinforces his distance from pious kingship, thereby frustrating our attempts to read his victory as a restoration, or establishment, of sovereign order. The scene of his misleading exchange with Macduff, for example, ends with the portrait of England's saintly King Edward whose methods deeply contrast with Malcolm's own. Describing Edward's god-given power to cure, known as "the king's touch," the doctor reports how, "at [Edward's] touch, / Such sanctity hath Heaven given his hand, / They [the ill] presently amend" (143–45). Malcolm elaborates, saying to Macduff that the king can heal

> the Evil:
> A most miraculous work in this good King,
> Which often, since my here-remain in England,
> I have seen him do. How he solicits Heaven,
> Himself best knows; but strangely-visited people,
> All swoln and ulcerous, pitiful to the eye,
> The mere despair of surgery, he cures.
>
> [4.3.146–52]

In treating "the Evil," namely the physical malady of scrofula, the king heals "strangely-visited people," a descriptive phrase that recalls Scotland's own trauma under Macbeth, himself the object of strange visitations in the form of the witches, ghosts, and visions. Indeed, the description of England's "Evil" powerfully resonates in the context of Scotland's own plague with the crime of treason, a point persuasively argued by Susanne L. Wofford, who writes that the play "nostalgically invokes the English King as healer of the body private and politic—the successful doctor missing in Scotland is found in the English King who can heal by the laying on of hands."[50] While Duncan attempts to excise the treasonous plague through violent surgery, executing the criminal Cawdor, "the Evil" only multiplies, becoming "[t]he mere despair of surgery." Edward's ability to heal through the divine gift of touch imaginatively provides a cure, fulfilling Duncan's earlier longing for an art to heal the Evil that haunted his kingdom and resulted in his death.

The model of monarchy presented in this short, idealized portrait of Edward's reign offers a powerful antidote to the bloody tyranny of Macbeth, suggesting a form of pious rule for beleaguered Scotland. Although Edward receives Malcolm in England and therefore symbolically purifies the Scottish heir, nevertheless the connection of

[50] Susanne L. Wofford, "The Body Unseamed: Shakespeare's Late Tragedies," *Shakespeare's Late Tragedies*, 3.

monarchy and treason established with Cawdor's opening scaffold speech argues against the possibility of a divine monarch, independent of treasonous machinations. Juxtaposing the two episodes of 4.3, one of deception, in which Malcolm slanders himself before Macduff, and one of healing, in which Malcolm depicts Edward's curative powers, throws into high relief the contrast between the English and the Scottish contexts. Malcolm's testing of Macduff exposes the tragic condition of Scotland's monarchy, which combines strong rule with traitorous arts. The contrasting portrait of Edward thus represents the illusion of divine kingship that Malcolm and his countrymen can no longer experience.

Although the play struggles to assert a model of divine kingship in the figures of Duncan and Edward the Confessor, it ultimately challenges the ideological opposition of monarch and traitor by intertwining these roles. Macbeth's own rule most clearly undermines the distinction by combining the tactics of traitor and king. Yet even before he succeeds to the throne, Scottish kingship appears compromised by Duncan's imperceptive, vulnerable rule. Duncan dismisses interpretive arts, in part because he sees his political landscape in terms of absolutes, dividing his soldier friends from his foreign enemies. Such oppositions fail to account for the conceptual fog that hovers over Scotland, blurring the distinction between male and female, as with the witches and Lady Macbeth, and ally and traitor, as with Macbeth himself. If material, gendered bodies become indistinguishable in the play, as Marjorie Garber has so effectively argued, so too the immaterial categories of truth and falsity lose their definition: the witches' speeches defy such rigid characterization, hovering between accurate prophecy and alluring deceit. As a result, the nation's successful king combines the attributes of monarch and traitor, negotiating between legitimacy and deceit in order to establish his rule. Despite Norbrook's astute analysis that the play ends with the recuperation of authentic, public language, evident when "Macduff is able to proclaim an end to dissimulation" (111), Malcolm's trajectory from silent witness of his father's murder to deceptive leader who tricks Macbeth undermines such assurances. Rather than offering, as Norbrook suggests, "not just a restoration but the foundation of a new and more stable order" (112), Malcolm's accession in the play tragically demonstrates that only by adopting the tools of the traitor can the king triumph on Scotland's foggy heath.

Ironically, if state spectacles should instruct potential traitors to abstain from transgressing, in the case of *Macbeth*, the traitor's tricks instead educate the country's future rulers. Specifically, the initial spectacle of Cawdor's execution backfires, since rather than inspiring loyalty it teaches Malcolm the value of deceptive rhetoric and bolsters Macbeth's ambition for the crown. Staging Malcolm's tragic education at the hands of Cawdor and Macbeth, the play presses on the boundaries of English Renaissance model of tragedy. Rather than confirming the didacticism implied in Sidney's definition, the play instead reinforces the more radical implications of his model: tragedy imagines a theatrical world in which the political and epistemological oppositions between king and traitor, innocent and guilty, internal and external, bleed into one another. The tragic genre as represented in *Macbeth* thus exposes how the transgressions of witches and traitors lie in the tissue of each spectator as well, hidden just beneath the surface and waiting to be exposed on the tragic scaffold.

Macbeth's Dying Speech

Opening with the failed didacticism of Cawdor, *Macbeth* ends with Malcolm's alleged triumph over treason. But amidst the celebration of Malcolm's victory lies a ghost plot, haunting the final scene. This ghost plot concerns the manner of Macbeth's death, a topic that plagues him for the second half of the play. Given the doubling of Macbeth and Cawdor, both in name and in deed, Macbeth's death has already been written in Cawdor's in the first act. To make the spectral relation complete, Macbeth should follow his namesake's example, didactically confessing in the final scene, and allowing his title to pass to yet another presumably traitorous Cawdor. This plot-not-taken remains a possibility until the end, a possibility that seems all the stronger given the historical precedent of traitors who, despite their fierce challenges to authority, appear to repent in their final moments.

Juxtaposing the deaths of the two Cawdors highlights the tragic power of Macbeth's decision to embrace bloodshed as a means of carving his own end. His manner of dying opposes that of his earlier namesake: while Cawdor's speech recalls the dying last words of the vast majority of traitors, Macbeth becomes a bestial fighter who defies human expectation. His death betrays a fiendish intensity challenging not only the state that the king had formerly ruled but also the religious faith to which he is expected to turn. Realizing that the riddling prophecies of the witches are fulfilled, Macbeth, like Marlowe's Faustus, condemns himself to hell on stage, presenting the audience with a vision of terror: the transgressive subject refuses or is unable to repent, therefore damning himself before our eyes. Cawdor, in the conventional manner, offers himself to a theatre of execution watching rapt as he utters his last words, be they authentic, insincere, or entirely fictional. In violent contrast to this allegedly docile subject on the scaffold, Macbeth cries "before my body / I throw my warlike shield" (5.8.32–33). In doing so, he challenges the relation of spectator and actor that operates on the scaffold by forcing us to examine our own generic expectations for repentance and restoration even as we gaze at him. As with Perseus's triumph over Medusa, Macbeth turns his spectral shield to the audience, opposing the conventions for pious death and allowing himself, momentarily, to triumph. Denying expectation, damning himself, yet famously inventing his own plot, Macbeth reveals Cawdor's formula to be weak art indeed.