A STUDY OF THE IMAGERY OF SHAKESPEARE'S

MAJOR TRAGEDIES IN RELATION TO THEIR

SOURCES

WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO MACBETH,

HAMLET, OTHELLO AND KING LEAR

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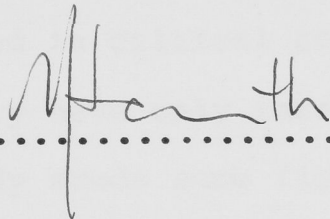
(submitted December 16, 1972)

This thesis contains no matter
which has been accepted for the
award of any other degree or diploma
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of my knowledge and belief, contains
no material published or written by
another person, except when due
reference is made in the text.

Dated the 9th day of December , 1972.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

PREFACE

        In the following thesis all quotations from
Shakespeare's plays are taken from the Arden Shakespeare
paperbacks series, with the exception of the <u>Hamlet</u>
quotations which come from the New Kittredge Shakespeares
edition. The texts of the source works were found in
various editions. I regret not having been able to
refer to Geoffrey Bullough's <u>Narrative and Dramatic</u>
<u>Sources of Shakespeare Volume 7: Major Tragedies</u> which
was published too late for use here.

        Sources for plots, incidents and characters
in Shakespeare's plays have been quite thoroughly
investigated and well documented in critical commentary
to date, but sources for imagery have only rarely been
touched upon. I hope this study sheds some light on
the processes by which Shakespeare created the imagery
in his major tragedies.

                                        N.L.K.

Port Moresby, 1972.

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CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION

While the work of Spurgeon, Clemen, Heilman
and other imagery-critics has established a new dimension
of interpretation for Shakespeare's drama, the approach
of these writers has met with opposition from various
quarters. Sometimes this opposition has been well-
documented and thoughtfully argued, as in the case of
Lillian Hornstein's objections to Caroline Spurgeon's
counting and classification of images.[1] Miss Spurgeon's
method of deducing personality traits and behavioural
propensities in the poet provides interesting reading,
but the sheer weight of learned opinion that has argued
convincingly against it has brought this particular
aspect of her work into disrepute. Although the bio-
graphical theory of imagery interpretation finds few
adherents, the other phase of Caroline Spurgeon's work,
which related the imagery to the themes, characters and
incidents in the plays,[2] has been developed into a major

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1. See L.H. Hornstein, "Imagery and Biography: They Are
   of the Imagination All Compact", in <u>College English</u>,
   Vol. 8, (1947), pp. 248-50.
2. As contained in Part II of her book <u>Shakespeare's
   Imagery and What it Tells Us</u>, Cambridge, 1935, and
   in "Leading Motives in the Imagery of Shakespeare's
   Tragedies" (Shakespeare Association Lecture, 1930).

area of critical concern. Along with Miss Spurgeon's
pioneer studies, the works of W.H. Clemen, R.B. Heilman,
G. Wilson Knight and M.M. Morozov remain as the major
texts on the function of the imagery in Shakespeare's
plays.

Interpretations by these critics have provided
valuable insights into the poetic structure and meaning
of the plays, but opposition has come from scholars
interested in the theory behind the process of imagery
criticism. The problems raised have involved two main
centres: first, the definition of the term "imagery"; and
second, the causes and effects of both the single image
and the multiple-linked series of images. The major
problems of definition concern a) the visual suggestions
of the term "image", b) the great variety of literary
devices and functions the term has been used to cover,
and c) the modernity of the term. The major problem
concerning the causes and effects of imagery (i.e. the
problem surrounding descriptions of the process by which
a writer creates an image or image-pattern, and its sequel,
the process by which an audience receives and evaluates
imagery's significance) has involved the roles played by
the conscious and unconscious workings of the human
faculties. A recent book, by P.N. Furbank,[1] has confronted

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1. Reflections on the Word 'Image', London, 1970.

these problems in a healthily aggressive way and has
opened new inroads into the theories behind the term
"imagery".

Furbank's intention is to clear away the
fuzziness surrounding the definition of "imagery". He
has particular objections to make against the Shakespear-
ean imagery-critics because of their willingness to make
extensive use of a shadowy term, without ever, in his
opinion, coming to grips with it. Furbank's perceptive
analyses of the approaches of Spurgeon, Clemen, Heilman
and Rosemary Tuve lay bare some of the major (and minor)
contradictions in these critics' methods. Since he is
concerned only to find the chinks in these critics' armour,
Furbank ignores most of what is valuable in their inter-
pretations, his arguments often seeming to be those of a
"mad pedant" (a term he uses to describe himself).
Nevertheless, Furbank's work has opened new perspectives
on the study of imagery, and, although I don't always
agree with his conclusions, I will enlist the aid of his
perceptiveness in my discussion of the major problems in
Shakespearean imagery criticism.

The first problem concerns the visual connot-
ations of the word "image". Miss Spurgeon, while "roughly
speaking", as was her wont, called the image a "little
word picture" and went on to describe how the metaphorical

words in Shakespeare's line "aged ears play truant at
his tales" conjured up "the picture of old grave men
beguiled from their serious thought or labours by merry
chatter of attractive and irresponsible youth".[1] Furbank
counters this is not the picture suggested by the line.
He says the picture of ears playing truant is an im-
possibility, or else a Boschian grotesquery whose mood
does not fit the context of the line at all. He claims
the image works on an intellectual level rather than a
visual level. I feel neither critic is wholly right.
Miss Spurgeon is wrong to suggest that the basis of the
image is visual, and Furbank is wrong to insist that the
image does not conjure up secondary aspects of a pictorial
nature. What Miss Spurgeon was talking about were the
effects poetic language can have on the reader who allows
his imagination to be caught up in the host of associations
and emotions produced by a provocative line. What
Furbank was talking about was the exact denotation of the
linguistic units in the line. Both were talking about
the effects and meaning of an "image" since both were
talking about a process of understanding which involved
the imagination. J. Middleton Murry wrote eloquently on

1. C.F.E. Spurgeon, Shakespeare's Imagery, p. 9.

this problem: "The image may be visual, may be auditory,

may refer back to any primary physical experience", but

we must

> resolutely exclude from our minds the suggestion
> that the image is solely or even predominately
> visual and allow the word to share in the height-
> ened and comprehensive significance with which
> its derivative 'imagination' has perforce been
> endowed...[1]

The approaches of Spurgeon and Furbank to this particular

image (the ears playing truant) are typical of the two

writers' attitudes in general. Spurgeon is inclined to

let her imagination carry her away while Furbank is often

unwilling to allow the imagination its fair and proper

place in the apprehension of imagery.

Working from Aristotle and Coleridge, Murry has

described the role of the imagination in helping the read-

er or listener to grasp the idea contained in an image.

The imagination actively participates in the perception

of similarity between dissimilars, in the process by

which the less familiar is assimilated to the more

familiar and the unknown to the known, and in the dis-

covery of universal themes inherent in individual

instances. The image, being "the most singular and potent

instrument of the faculty of imagination",[2] is the cue

1. J. Middleton Murry, "Metaphor" (1931), in <u>Shakespeare
   Criticism 1919-1935</u>, ed. A. Ridler, London, 1965, pp.
   226-41. Quotation from p. 229.
2. J. Middleton Murry, in <u>ibid</u>., p. 229.

upon which the imagination acts. An image may command the reader's imagination to create a picture, or a sound, or a smell, or it may command the creation of a complex emotional or intellectual experience. In this, an image is not just a "word-picture", nor does it only cover the formal terms "simile" and "metaphor", rather it can be seen to relate to a variety of literary devices in all of which the imagination is commanded to act in order to present to the reader a full understanding.

Thus we come to the second problem considered by Furbank who said the term "imagery" was used to cover so many literary devices it had become meaningless. What Furbank didn't realise, and what Murry observed, was that the term "imagery" points towards the fundamental identity in the various literary terms it subsumes. It finds the common denominator - imagination - in many literary functions. Thus, while it is a more basic term, it is also a more general term, covering simile, metaphor, and the other figures of speech used for purposes of analogy, covering also the creation of atmosphere and the amplification of themes through iterated emotive words or artistically expedient expression. A.S. Downer's analogy between the term "imagery" and "one of the old patent medicines which cured everything from sterility

to toothache"[1] is a false analogy. "Imagery", as a
literary term, is simply a comprehensive term based on a
genuine similarity to be found in various literary devices
and functions. Its singular, the "image", simply refers
to the individual appearance of such a device or the
appearance of an individual element in a pattern of
iterated words or expressions. This is the way the most
respected Shakespearean imagery-critics have used the
term. Clemen, Heilman, Muir, Morozov, and many others
whose contributions don't figure quite as importantly as
these, have accepted and used the term in its compre-
hensive sense, and the fact that Furbank has had to delve
into the dustier corners of Clemen's and Heilman's work[2]
in order to score points, shows that by and large the

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1. A.S. Downer, "The Life of Our Design: The Function
   of Imagery in the Poetic Drama", in The Hudson
   Review, Vol. 2, (1949), pp. 242-63. Quotation from
   p. 244.
2. See for example Furbank, op. cit., p. 55, where
   Furbank quotes Heilman, but the quotation is not
   as major as Furbank suggests. It is buried in a
   note at the end of one of Heilman's books.

application of the term has been successful.[1]

So far I have had to disagree with Furbank's conclusions, but in his examination of the following two problems I find his analyses more hard-hitting. The first concerns his objections to the modernity of the term. The present usage of the word "image" in critical studies of the drama of Shakespeare's era dates back only as far as the nineteen-thirties - to the already mention-ed studies of Spurgeon and Murry. Before these, "poetic imagery" in Elizabethan drama had been studied extensively by H.W. Wells in the nineteen-twenties.[2] The term "image" is ultimately traced back to Coleridge's Shakespearean criticism, and even further, to Walter Whiter's Specimen

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1. Before Furbank, A.S. Downer (op. cit.) and R.A. Foakes ("Suggestions for a New Approach to Shakespeare's Imagery", Shakespeare Survey, No. 5, (1952), pp. 81-92) called for revision and standardisation in the use of the term "imagery". Both these writers were particularly interested in the functioning of imagery in drama. Foakes' thoughtful and influential essay concludes with the following advice for critics:

   "A discussion of dramatic imagery then would include reference to the subject-matter and object-matter of poetic imagery, to visual and auditory effects, iterative words, historical and geographical placing, and to both the general and particular uses of these things. Dramatic imagery would be examined primarily in relation to context, to dramatic context, and to the time-sequence of a play; the general or over-all patterns of word and image would be examined in relation to other effects, as well as for their own value".

2. H.W. Wells, Poetic Imagery Illustrated from Elizabethan Literature, New York, 1924.

of a Commentary on Shakespeare (1794), but these two
earlier writers used the term in a more pictorially
based sense than is general in the post-nineteen-
twenties critical commentary.

Furbank takes Shakespearean critics - especially
Rosamond Tuve[1] - to task for their imposition of a modern
term upon the literature of the sixteenth and seventeenth
centuries. He questions the relevance of a recently
evolved critical concept to the literature of an era in
which the concept did not exist. Furbank is correct in
pointing out the difference between what a literate
Elizabethan would have understood by the term "image"
and what a modern reader understands by it. In Shakes-
peare's day, as the contemporary text-books on rhetoric
show, the "image" was a particular figure of speech, one
of the many tropes considered necessary in the fashioning
of eloquent and persuasive speech. Richard Sherry, in his
Treatise of Schemes and Tropes (1550), defined the "image"
as a similitude expressed in the form "as...so...",[2] while
Thomas Wilson, in The Arte of Rhetorique (1553), said it

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1. See P.N. Furbank, op. cit., pp. 63-8 where he attacks
   Miss Tuve's use of "image" in her book Elizabethan and
   Metaphysical Imagery, Illinois, 1961.
2. See F.P. Wilson, Shakespeare and the Diction of Common
   Life, Shakespeare Lecture, 1941, p. 26.

was the name of the figure used to "compare one manne
with another, as Salust compareth Ceasar [sic] and Cato
together".[1] Though the Elizabethan definitions differ,
neither comes very near the modern usage of "image".

Furbank is right to suggest that this difference
should have been more forcibly explained by the Shakes-
pearean critics who took up the modern use of the term,
but this fact does not make their interpretative efforts
worthless. If an analogy might be allowed here, no modern
scientist hesitates to talk about the earth revolving
around the sun during the sixteenth century even though
science in that era claimed the sun revolved around the
earth. If modern science produces new knowledge and
tools to better investigate old phenomena why should
modern criticism be disallowed to do the same? The
modern term "image" is a new tool - flexible in its
applicability, and exciting in the results it yields.
Shakespeare critics should take Furbank's point - that
the distinction between the Elizabethan and modern terms
must be stressed - but the problem is only a minor hurdle.

I have already mentioned the Elizabethan term

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1. Thomas Wilson, <u>The Arte of Rhetorique</u>, (1553), facsimile,
   Florida, 1962, p. 233.

"trope": a term from rhetoric carried over into the
literary criticism of the day. It is a pity Furbank did
not investigate this word more fully because in it lies
a parallel term to the modern "image". In 1895,
writing on metaphors and similes in Elizabethan drama,
F.I. Carpenter defined the use of "trope" in Shakespeare's
day with the following words (which are readily comparable
to Murry's definition of imagery):

> Trope...a generic term comprising the principal
> aesthetic or imaginative figures, of which
> metaphor and simile are the leading examples.
> ...They may be legitimately treated together
> for the reason that a common principle, the
> principle of imagination, underlies them all.[1]

Some twentieth century imagery-critics, notably Rosamond
Tuve and G. Wilson Knight, have used the words "image"
and "trope" interchangeably. As the corellation between
Carpenter's and Murry's definitions indicates, this inter-
changeability is based on genuine similarities. But the
important point is that while the Elizabethans did not
have the modern term "image" they did have the term
"trope". It can be readily shown that what modern Shakes-
pearean critics understand by the word "imagery" was
largely covered by the Elizabethan rhetoricians' word

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1. F.I. Carpenter, Metaphor and Simile in the Minor
   Elizabethan Drama (1895), reissued New York, 1967.

"tropes". A sampling of Elizabethans expounding on the trope can demonstrate this.

The word "trope" was employed as a general term to describe all the figures of speech (synecdoche, metonymy, simile,metaphor, personification, allegory, etc.) plus any other "liuely and stirring" use of pictorial language.[1] In 1593, Henry Peacham defined the trope as an "artificiall" use of language in which one borrowed "the name of one thing, to signifie another, which did in some part or property of nature resemble it".[2] The reasons for using tropes rather than non-figurative language were that the latter lacked "sweet-nesse" and "grace", and "could not declare the nature of the thing so well". To this Peacham added the "liuely and stirring" use of language, thus incorporating into the term "trope" any unusually significant or pleasantly profitable use of language (especially the kind that evoked a picture in the mind) which might have been occasioned by "necessitie", "will", or "arte".[3] Thomas

1. See T. Wilson, op. cit., pp. 192ff; Puttenham, The Arte of Poesie (1589), in G. Gregory Smith (ed.) Elizabethan Critical Essays, Vol. II, Oxford, 1950, p. 162 (it is noticeable that all Puttenham's critical terms for poetry come from the rhetoricians' classifications); and H. Peacham, The Garden of Eloquence (1593), facsimile, Florida, 1954, pp. 1ff.
2. H. Peacham, op. cit., p. 1.
3. Ibid., pp. 1-2.

Wilson gave the following as an example of the use of tropes. Wishing to describe "some notable Pharisee", he wrote:

> Yonder man is of a croked iudgment, his wyttes are clowdie, he liueth in deepe darkenes, dusked altogether wyth blynde ignoraunce, and drowned in the raginge sea, of bottomeles superstition.[1]

"Thus is the ignoraunte set out," added Wilson, "by callinge hym croked, clowdye, darke, blinde, and drownde in superstition. All whiche wordes are not proper vnto ignoraunce, but borrowed of other thinges, that are of lyke nature."

Elizabethan rhetoricians spent a great deal of time defining and classifying the scores of different tropes because they believed the use of tropes in a speech was comparable to the inclusion of particularly startling jewels at intervals along a string of less impressive beads. Orators had to know their tropes because in the well-constructed persuasive speech tropes inserted at intervals along the thread of the argument served most important functions: they retained the listener's attention, refreshed his powers of awareness, kept his mind actively involved, and helped lead him to a realization of the conclusions towards which the speech

1. T. Wilson, op. cit., p. 192.

was aimed. As Miss Tuve has observed,[1] tropes were not
supposed to be purely decorative. They did provide a
certain amount of refreshing decoration and added graceful
flourish, but the principle of decorum demanded that they
be fitting to the speech as a whole. That many Elizabethan
orators made excessive and unfitting use of tropes is well-
known, and they were condemned by contemporary rhetoricians.

The correct theory and practice of rhetoric
formed a major part of education in Shakespeare's day.
Classical authority (Quintilian, Cicero, etc.) advocated
its importance, and respected educators like Ascham and
Elyot also stressed the necessity of its inclusion in a
good education. It is likely that formal education in
rhetorical tropes went little farther than identifying and
labelling the great variety, but there was an undoubted
awareness of the figures of rhetoric in Shakespeare's
society, especially in the university and court worlds
where eloquence was expected. Since the Elizabethan
theatre was closely attached to the universities and the
court, and since the drama was the art form most closely
related to the art of rhetoric, one is not surprised to
find strong rhetorical influence in both the writing and

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1. In "'Imitation' and Images", in Elizabethan Poetry:
   Modern Essays in Criticism, ed. P.J. Alpers, New York,
   1967, pp. 41-62.

delivery of Elizabethan dramatic speech.

That Shakespeare was aware of the pronounce-
ments of the rhetoricians seems most likely. (There is
evidence to suggest he read Wilson's and Puttenham's
books.) That he realized what tropes were and that he realised he
himself fashioned many, it would be disrespectful to
doubt. And this brings me to the fourth problem mentioned
earlier: the common trend in modern imagery criticism to
question Shakespeare's conscious awareness of the imagery
he created. If his education taught him to be aware of
tropical or imaginative language in speeches and literature,
and if his professional world was oriented towards the same
awareness, why shouldn't he have been fully conscious of
tropes in his own writing for the stage? He must have
been passionately concerned about how his audience received
his lines. How could he facilitate their understanding of
the unfamiliar? How could he create in them complex emotion-
al or intellectual experiences? How could he retain their
interest and refresh their awareness? How could he satisfy
the era's penchant for the graceful and the ornate?
Rhetoric, and especially its tropical figures, was what the
age offered as solution.

Imagery criticism has been strongly influenced
by three works, each of them concerned with the unconscious
creation of Shakespeare's imagery. They are Whiter's

Specimen of a Commentary on Shakespeare, Armstrong's
Shakespeare's Imagination, and the first part of Spurgeon's
work mentioned earlier.[1] These three books have loomed so
large in imagery criticism their combined effect has been
to produce a general acceptance of the belief that the
unconscious element in Shakespeare's creation of imagery
was much more important than the conscious element. In
the face of this majority belief Furbank has argued
magnificently for the exorcism of this strange theory
whereby the master artist achieves his most complex feats
in an inspired stupor or else in a state of absorbed
inattention.[2] With respect to this problem, I feel Miss
Spurgeon is most to blame. She placed Shakespeare at the
mercy of his unconscious associations unwittingly churning
out secret information about himself, which led her to
produce such useless and suspect conclusions as "Shakes-
peare seems more sensitive to the horror of bad smells
than to the allure of fragrant ones".[3] But strangely
enough, Miss Spurgeon's ideas were reinforced by the two

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1. See W. Whiter, A Specimen of a Commentary on Shakes-
   peare (1794), facsimile, Yorkshire, 1972; E.A. Armstrong,
   Shakespeare's Imagination, London, 1946; and C.F.E.
   Spurgeon, op. cit., Part I.
2. P.N. Furbank, op. cit., pp. 52-6.
3. C.F.E. Spurgeon, op. cit., p. 80.

important imagery studies mentioned above. Working from
Locke's theory of association of ideas, Walter Whiter
made some convincing statements about restoration of
Shakespeare's text and about the clustering of certain
images throughout his canon. E.A. Armstrong took up
Whiter's stance and, with added help from Freud and
Jung, came up with a thorough analysis of the phenomenon
of image-clustering in Shakespeare's writing. The
influence of these works has been widespread.[1] Furbank
suggests that one of the reasons critics have wished to
consider imagery "more naive, more exalted, and less
conscious than the other elements in the play" is so they
can work all sorts of weird operations on it to produce
interpretations the author could not possibly have
intended.[2]

The influence of Whiter and Armstrong has been
exaggerated because critics have not understood the basic
stances of these men. Whiter explained before his analysis
that he was confining himself to that imagery which he

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1. Cf. the following examples: R.B. Heilman, Magic in the
   Web, Kentucky, 1956, p. 239; R.A. Foakes, op. cit., p.
   90; F.P. Wilson, Shakespeare and the Diction of Common
   Life, (Shakespeare Lecture, 1941), p. 3.
2. P.N. Furbank, op. cit., p. 62.

suspected of being unconsciously produced. He had to do
this because Locke's theory was not relevant for conscious-
ly associated ideas. By choice he was not concerned with
the great bulk of Shakespeare's imagery. In explaining
his position, and the meaning of Locke's associating
principle, Whiter wrote:

> ...nor, as referred to the genius of the poet,
> do I mean that active power, which passes
> rapidly through a variety of successive images,
> which discovers with so wonderful an acuteness
> their relations and dependancies; and which
> combines them with such exquisite effect in all
> the pleasing forms of fiction and invention.[1]

The associating principle had nothing to do with the usual
process of poetic creation out of which most imagery is
born. This process, according to Whiter, involved a
consciously developed mastery over ideas and the workings
of the mind. Armstrong also dissociated himself from the
bulk of Shakespeare's imagery. By considering some mutant
strains - a few groups of seemingly unrelated ideas which
stuck together fairly regularly in the poet's work -
Armstrong hoped to conduct a psychological examination of
Shakespeare. Neither Whiter nor Armstrong intended their
works to show that imagery was created mainly unconsciously.

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1. W. Whiter, op. cit., pp. 64-5. Note Whiter's use of
   the word "image" refers to individual pictures in the
   mind, two of which might be drawn together to produce
   what twentieth century critics term an "image".

What they were interested in was how unconscious elements occasionally affected imagery creation.

Furbank argues for the recognition of imagery creation as a consciously pursued activity indicative of the writer's ability in his art. Furbank says it is slighting to Shakespeare to claim otherwise. This is certainly how the Elizabethan rhetoricians viewed trope creation. It was an artistic skill that had to be mastered, but like other artistic skills its productive power was dependent on the imaginative genius supplied by the individual artist.[1]

In its influence on Elizabethan drama rhetoric provided the dramatists with the bases for many of the distinctive qualities in their imagery. Earlier Elizabethan plays, like those of Kyd, Marlowe and the early Shakespeare, show rhetoric's influence not fully integrated into the drama. There was an abundance of artificial ornament and

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1. Imagery-critics attempting to explain the existence of image-patterns or image-systems traceable throughout individual Shakespearean plays have relied heavily on the unconscious creation theory. They forget, as Miss Tuve has pointed out, that the rhetoricians stressed the importance of linking tropes together in "harmony" through "the skilful fitness of figures, their relation to a luminous whole design" (Tuve, op. cit., pp. 46ff.) The fact, observed frequently by critics, that many image-patterns develop logically during the progress of the play in which they appear, adds more weight to the argument that they were produced consciously.

hyperbolic or declamatory language. The images tended to
be laboured, and developed primarily for their own sake,
so they became detachable flourishes rather than inte-
grated elements of the play as a whole. Verbal wit, puns,
sonorous elaboration, artificial balance in phrasing,
compounding of details, and exaggerated invective were
the early inheritance from rhetoric. But along with this
came a striving for formal beauty (something more important
than pure decoration), and an attempt to gain intellig-
ibility by relating ideas to the literal and concrete.
For example, the proverb was an important figure in
rhetorical training because orators and writers were
encouraged to turn to the issues of common life for illus-
trative material in their arguments.

In the drama after 1600 the artificial mode gave
way to a more integrated poetic mode. Rhetoric's principles
of order developed into an aesthetic control of language.
The best example of this refinement of rhetoric's principles
was in the work of Shakespeare. The old framework of
balance and illustration still existed but the images
were more tightly woven into the fabric of the drama.
Shakespeare's images generally became less artificial and
more closely linked to living speech. The structure,
fitness and liveliness from rhetoric were still there,
but the beauty was of a less self-conscious, more natural

kind, while the didactic element became less formal and more immediate for the audience. Though rhetoric had earlier avoided the language of the common man, Shakespeare transformed common speech according to the rhetorical principles of order and created dramatic poetry both beautiful and natural.

A.S. Downer has claimed that the study of imagery ignores the importance of the poetry's dramatic nature. He said Shakespeare's plays belong to the theatre, where an audience has no chance to interpret the deeper significances and interplay of images "...since we are reasonably deaf to spoken poetry."[1] This might be said of modern audiences, but is it as true of Elizabethan audiences who, in a largely illiterate age, were still familiar with the oral traditions of literature - the passing on of news, history, stories and ballads by word of mouth? It seems more likely that the Elizabethans were very good listeners, and their familiarity with the orator's art (either through education or experience) suggests they would have been particularly aware of the use of imagery in dramatic speech.

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1. A.S. Downer, op. cit., p. 22. See also J. Lawlor, "Mind and Hand: Some Reflections on the Study of Shakespeare's Imagery", Shakespeare Quarterly, Vol. 8, (1957), pp. 179-80.

F.P. Wilson has recreated the climate in which
Shakespeare's image-making took place.[1] A characteristic
of the age was its penchant for the use of metaphor.
Correspondences, similarities and substitutions were
eagerly sought after in the phenomenal world for the
information they revealed concerning the pattern of God's
creation. Hardin Craig has observed the climate of source-
hunting in which Shakespeare worked.[2] He points out that
Elizabethan writers had no habit of inventing plots and
very slight tendancy to invent incidents. The age looked
backward to a lost perfection, to the authority of the
ancients, not forward to unexploited novelty. Their
concept of the universality of man made repetition of thought
the major practice. For this they hunted all over the
world of literature and into the well-documented issues
of the contemporary world. Originality consisted in how
the found elements were drawn together. The word
"invention", in the rhetorical terminology, referred to
the gathering together of material, especially from
literary sources. "The whole theory and practice of
composition was based on the teaching of the art of
copiousness or amplification of existent themes with

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1. F.P. Wilson, op. cit., p. 4.
2. H. Craig, "Motivation in Shakespeare's Choice of
   Materials", Shakespeare Survey, No. 4, (1951), pp.
   28-30.

already existent matter".[1] So in the creative process
the Elizabethans did not give imagination free rein. It
was still at work, but not spontaneously so. It took its
place behind certain rules and well-tried methods. In
this climate of trope-making and source-hunting Shakespeare
wrote his major tragedies and fashioned their imagery.

Following Whiter and Spurgeon, critics have
accepted the statement that "the great bulk of Shakespeare's
images is taken from everyday things, [from] the goings-on
of familiar life".[2] Lillian Hornstein sounded a warning
against personal experience as the only source area for
Shakespeare's imagery by quoting Lord Byron:

> 'People think I must be a bit of a sailor from
> my writings. All the sea-terms I use are from
> authority, and they cost me time, toil and
> trouble to look them out; but you will find me
> a landlubber.'[3]

In fact, the source areas for Shakespeare's imagery cover
a wide range of experience, not only personal, but also
second-hand in the form of literature. The main literary
sources from which he took material for imagery were the
Bible, the Classics, his own previous works and, most
importantly, the specific source books he used for the

1. _Ibid._, p. 28.
2. F.P. Wilson, _op. cit._, pp. 14-5
3. L.H. Hornstein, _op. cit._, p. 249.

writing of each individual play. The major non-literary source areas for imagery appear to have been in contemporary life-styles (domestic, trades, theatre, etc.) and contemporary notions (political, philosophical, scientific). Living people and known places may have been used too. Influence also came from proverbs and emblems, many of which were literary in origin but were transmitted by common conversation and other non-literary means. A very brief list of examples must suffice to illustrate the influence of these source areas.

In Hamlet and Macbeth images of guilt derive from the Bible. Old Hamlet's dying "full of bread" (3.3.80) is related to Ezekiel 16:49, while the image of the stones crying out in Macbeth (2.1.58) comes from Luke 19:40. The greater number of Shakespeare's biblical images may be traced to the Old Testament Psalms, Proverbs, Genesis and Job, and the New Testament Gospels, though the other books (including those of the Apocrypha) were influential too.[1] Shakespeare often exploited the scriptural aura of seriousness and concern in these borrowed images, most of which derive gravity and authority from their biblical background.

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1. R. Noble's Shakespeare's Biblical Knowledge, London, 1935, gives biblical parallels many of which concern Shakespeare's imagery. See also J.H. Sims, Dramatic Uses of Biblical Allusions in Marlowe and Shakespeare, Florida, 1966.

Another perennially influential source area for imagery was the work of the classical authors, the Latin writers being most influential. Shakespeare's reading in the classics provided material for much imagery. This material appears to derive mainly from contemporary translations rather than the original Latin and Greek. For example, Othello's "Pontic Sea" image comes from Book II, chapter 97 of Pliny's Historia Naturalis in Holland's translation (1601). Macbeth's "Approach thou like... The arm'd rhinoceros, or th' Hyrcan tiger" (3.4.99-100) seems to derive from this translation too. Muir has pointed out that the Hircanian tiger and the rhinoceros are mentioned on adjacent pages of Holland's Pliny.[1] The classical writer most influential on Shakespeare's imagery was Seneca, whose works were available to him in a number of translations. Macbeth's "Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood Clean from my hand?" (2.2.59-60) derives from an identical idea used on several occasions by Seneca. Shakespeare borrowed from Seneca when he wanted images of horror, fear or guilt, or when he wanted imagery to illustrate psychological conflict or universal disorder. Shakespeare used the work of Virgil,

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1. K. Muir, (ed.) Macbeth, Arden edition, p. 98.

Ovid and Plautus at various times during his career, and
they affected his image-making in several plays. Shakes-
peare's familiarity with Aesop's fables is especially
noticeable in the imagery of the history plays, but
amongst the Greeks Plutarch was most influential. Murry
and Spurgeon have commented on the relationship between
North's translation of his Lives (1579) and the imagery
of the Roman plays.[1]

The influence of emblem literature on Shakes-
peare's imagery has been discussed by M. Praz.[2] He
observed the fallacy in H. Green's approach[3] which
claimed emblem books were the sources for much of Shakes-
peare's imagery. Green did not give sufficient emphasis
to the currency of the ideas illustrated in emblem
literature. Many emblems were proverbial (in which case
the influence could have come to Shakespeare through
conversation or other literature), many were based on
popular fables, and many derived from the ancients in the
form of mottos and wise sayings. For example, Green notes

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1. C.F.E. Spurgeon, op. cit., pp. 55 and 345-9, and J.
   Middleton Murry, op. cit., pp. 56-7.
2. Studies in Seventeenth Century Imagery, Vol. 1,
   London, 1939.
3. H. Green, Shakespeare and the Emblem Writers, London,
   1870.

Whitney's Choice of Emblemes (1586)[1] as the major influence
on Lady Macbeth's "look like th' innocent flower But be the
serpent under 't" (Macbeth 1.5.64-5). Shakespeare used
this idea on a number of occasions, as did other writers,
and it is ultimately derived from Virgil's Eclogues 3.93:
"latet anguis in herba", most likely as well-known a
saying in Elizabethan times as "a snake in the grass" is
nowadays. Shakespeare was undoubtedly familiar with some
of the 700 emblem books in print in his time, and these
very likely had a general effect on the pictorial quality
of much of his illustrative imagery, but to insist on
individual emblems as particular sources is a risky
business.[2]

On occasions Shakespeare's own works appear to
have influenced the imagery in his later writing. This
phenomenon has been noticed by Kenneth Muir and others.[3]

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1. The emblem appears on p. 24 of the original.
2. Further discussion of the influence of emblem literature
   may be found in R. Freeman, English Emblem Books in
   Elizabethan Literature, London, 1948; F.B. Fieler's
   "Introduction" and H. Green's "Introductory Dissertation"
   printed before Whitney's Choice of Emblemes in the New
   York reissue, 1967; and R.A. Fraser, Shakespeare's Poetics,
   London, 1962.
3. See K. Muir, Shakespeare's Sources, Vol. I, London, 1957,
   pp. 183-6; M.C. Bradbrook, "The Sources of Macbeth",
   Shakespeare Survey, No. 4, (1951), pp. 35-48; V.K.
   Whitaker, "In Search of Shakespeare's Journal", Studies
   in English Literature, Vol. 5, (1965), pp.303-15.

An interesting example concerns the "unweeded garden" image which Shakespeare developed in his history plays. This reappears, with further refinement, in <u>Hamlet</u> and <u>Macbeth</u>.

Non-literary source areas for imagery have been listed by Caroline Spurgeon[1] and involve most aspects of Elizabethan life: domestic scenes such as the kitchen and the stable, sports like bear-baiting or bowls, trades such as the blacksmith's and the carpenter's. Miss Spurgeon does not emphasise the influence of the theatre, as Whiter did,[2] but Shakespeare's own occupation had a strong effect on his imagery. For example, the imagery employed by Iago, who is himself an accomplished actor and director in his relationships with the other characters, includes reference to acts, plays, players, prologues, shows, and bearing a part. Other imagery in <u>Othello</u> alludes to cues, prompters and pageants. Throughout Shakespeare's canon, and especially in the mature works, the dramatist drew on the world he knew most intimately - the world of the theatre - in the fashioning of his imagery.

Contemporary political, philosophical and scientific notions figured in his imagery. The body politic, current as a political concept in Elizabethan

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1. <u>Op. cit.</u>, chapters IV-VII.
2. W. Whiter, <u>op. cit.</u>, pp. 153-98.

times, was used in illustrative images, as were notions
such as God's tuning of the spheres, planetary influence
on man's life, and the language of flowers, while
astronomy, alchemy and medical practice and theory
provided further material. The thoughts of Montaigne and
Machiavelli have been shown to have influenced Shakespeare's
imagery in a small way.[1] Suggestions have also been made
regarding the influence of real places and people. The
Fool's "wild-geese" image in King Lear (2.4.46) may be an
allusion to a Mrs Grace Wildgoose who appears to bear some
relation to the Lear story,[2] while the "martlet" image in
Macbeth (1.6.4) and the river-bridge image in The Rape of
Lucrece (1667-73) may owe their origins to Berkeley Castle
in Gloucestershire and Old Clopton Bridge at Stratford, as
Miss Spurgeon has suggested.[3]

Living in Elizabethan times would have presented
Shakespeare with another aspect of contemporary life probably
important to his image-making. Conversation, as F.P. Wilson

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1. See K. Muir, Shakespeare's Sources, pp. 161-2 and
   Appendix 6 to the Arden edition of King Lear, London,
   1968. See W. Lewis, The Lion and the Fox, London, 1966,
   p. 177, and M. Praz, The Flaming Heart, New York, 1958,
   p. 145.
2. See G.P.V. Akrigg, "Shakespeare's Living Sources",
   Queen's Quarterly (Canada), Vol. 65, (1958), pp. 239-50.
3. Shakespeare's Imagery, pp. 96-9 and Appendix VI, pp.
   374-7.

has shown,[1] abounded with the use of proverbs. Shakespeare

utilised proverbial characters and situations in his

imagery. For example, in Macbeth he used "the poor cat i'

th' adage" who let "'I dare not' wait upon 'I would'"

(1.7.44-5). Shakespeare linked this proverbial image

to the "wading" imagery found elsewhere in the play. The

image of the cat wanting to kill and enjoy the fish but not

daring to wet its feet (perfectly illustrating Macbeth's

situation at this point) develops directly into the later

Macbeth's

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

The advantage Shakespeare would have seen in imagery based

on proverbs was that it involved the familiar interests of

the common man and took up his attitudes towards life.

Such imagery afforded excellent illustrative material

since it combined familiarity, simplicity, and informal

authority.

     To date there has been a small amount of critical

attention given to the comparison of Shakespeare's imagery

with its sources. One of the titles that stands out among

the sustained studies is J.E. Hankins' Shakespeare's Derived

1. In Shakespeare and the Diction of Common Life, op. cit.,
    and The Proverbial Wisdom of Shakespeare, (Modern Human-
    ities Research Association Lecture, 1961).

Imagery.[1] It is a work devoted to imagery sources, but
it is not as general a study as its title suggests. In
fact, Hankins looks at only one source book - Googe's
translation of Pallingenius's Zodiake of Life (1560).
After analyzing parallel passages Hankins claims that the
Zodiake was a reservoir from which Shakespeare drew
imagery for all his plays. On many occasions Hankins'
argument strains to link Shakespeare's images with those
in the alleged source. As one must expect after consider-
ing the variety of books Shakespeare used for his plots,
he was unlikely to have been so attached to a single
source for his imagery. Hankins' work does not search out
the variety of influences on Shakespeare's imagery.
Another monograph is R.A. Fraser's study of emblem
literature and its relation to the poetry of King Lear.[2]
This book makes some suggestions about sources for imagery.
Fraser shows how Shakespeare's imagery was rooted in his
time, and how he levied on what was traditional and most
common in his culture, but the critic was not interested
in discovering specific sources for his images.

Although there has been no sustained examination
of the wide range of source material for Shakespeare's
imagery there are a small number of shorter works devoted

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1. J.E. Hankins, Shakespeare's Derived Imagery, Kansas, 1953.
2. R.A. Fraser, Shakespeare's Poetics, London, 1962.

to sections of the subject. Most are journal articles tracing the history of ideas behind a certain image. Worthy of note are the studies by L.J. Ross, D. Biggins, and W.A. Murray.[1] These critics have revealed the wide variety of motives that may underlie Shakespeare's choice of particular images.

One critic who has drawn together the areas of source study and imagery analysis is Maurianne S. Adams. Her examination of the imagery in Othello and its source will be discussed more fully later. By comparing Shakespeare's imagery with Cinthio's thematic use of language Miss Adams drew some revealing conclusions about the dramatist's methods of image-making.[2]

The first to touch on literary sources for imagery were J. Middleton Murry and Caroline Spurgeon. While discussing the Roman plays both critics observed how

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1. L.J. Ross, "The Meaning of Strawberries in Shakespeare", Studies in the Renaissance, Vol. 7, (1960), pp. 225-40, and "World and Chrysolite in Othello", Modern Language Notes, Vol. 86, (1961),pp. 683-92; D. Biggins, "Scorpions, Serpents and Treachery in Macbeth", Shakespeare Studies, Vol. 1, (1965), pp. 29-36; and W.A. Murray, "Why Was Duncan's Blood Golden?" Shakespeare Survey, No. 19, (1966), pp. 34-44.
2. M.S. Adams, "'Ocular Proof' in Othello and Its Source", PMLA, Vol. 79, (1964), pp. 234-41.

Shakespeare's reactions to the material in North's
Plutarch affected the imagery in his plays. Then, in
Miss Spurgeon's commentary on the "fire" imagery in
Romeo and Juliet she observed the influence of the
imagery in Arthur Brooke's source poem.[1]

Little more has been done in the field of
studying Shakespeare's imagery in relation to his
literary sources. The main aims of this study are to
trace the effects of literary sources on Shakespeare's
imagery (with special attention to those specific
sources used in the making of the major tragedies); to
attempt a demonstration of some of the steps taken by
the dramatist in the fashioning of his imagery; and to
show that the theory of Shakespeare's unconscious
creation of imagery must be modified to accommodate the
obviously direct influence of source books which were,
literally, right under his nose.

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1. J. Middleton Murry, "Metaphor", in op. cit., pp. 235-8;
   C.F.E. Spurgeon, Shakespeare's Imagery, pp. 55, 345-9,
   and 314-6. The same points were made in her earlier
   "Leading Motives in the Imagery of Shakespeare's
   Tragedies". See also p. 48 in her monograph where
   she suggests that Shakespeare's sea imagery was derived
   from books by Hakluyt, Strachey and others.

CHAPTER TWO

MACBETH

Most of the incidents and some of the imagery in <u>Macbeth</u> were derived from Raphael Holinshed's <u>Chronicles of England, Scotlande & Irelande</u> (1587). Shakespeare probably consulted Leslie's <u>De Origine, Moribus, et Rebus Gestis Scotorum</u> (1578) and Buchanan's <u>Rerum Scoticarum Historia</u> (1583) as well[1], however these chronicle histories gave him little help with the imaginative language of the play. For this he drew upon other sources. James I's <u>Daemonologie</u> (1597) provided details that Shakespeare wove into the scenes concerning the three witches[2], but it was Seneca (especially his <u>Agamemnon</u> and <u>Hercules Furens</u>) who was the main source for the atmospheric imagery associated initially with the foul and dark activities of the weird sisters and carried on throughout the play.

The other major influences on the imaginative language of <u>Macbeth</u> were the Bible and Shakespeare's own works. With a frequency and passion unequalled elsewhere

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1. See K. Muir, <u>Shakespeare's Sources</u>, Vol. 1, (London, 1957), pp. 169-175.
2. See K. Muir, <u>Ibid</u>., pp. 177-9.

in his writing, Shakespeare drew on the books of the Bible
for symbolic parallels to incidents in the play and for
scriptural authority relevant to the play's philosophical
argument. His derivations are generally from Genesis,
the Scriptures and Revelation, centring around the Creat-
ion and Fall, the Crucifixion, and Judgment Day. These
reservoirs Shakespeare tapped to enrich both the detail
and the meaning of his imagery. The atmospheric use of
animal imagery, for example, takes on special signific-
ance when it is realised that Shakespeare was appeal-
ing to a knowledge of the parts played by these animals
in the Bible. Another example involves the parallel
between the death of Duncan and the death of Christ, as
pointed out in the imaginative language surrounding the
incident, which allowed Shakespeare to expand the dimens-
ions of his drama to cosmic significance.

A number of critics have commented on Shakes-
peare's use of his own earlier works in the writing of
Macbeth[1]. Returning to Holinshed as major source undoubt-

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1. See K. Muir (ed.), Macbeth, Arden edition, (1967 re-
    print), Appendix D, for a summary of the affinities
    The Rape of Lucrece, 2 Henry VI and Richard III have
    with Macbeth. Muir mentions the work of M.C. Brad-
    brook (Shakespeare Survey, No. 4, (1951), pp. 35-48),
    O.S. Coad (Modern Language Notes, Vol. 38, pp. 185-7)
    and F.M. Smith (PMLA, Vol. 60, (1945), pp. 1003 ff.),
    amongst others. See also G. Wilson Knight, The
    Sovereign Flower, (London, 1958), Appendix D, pp. 280-
    6, and J.M. Nosworthy, "The Bleeding Captain Scene in
    Macbeth" in Review of English Studies, Vol. 22, (1946),
    pp. 126-30.

edly reminded Shakespeare of his earlier history plays,
and echoes of the Senecan-flavoured Richard III and 2
Henry VI have been discovered in Macbeth, along with
poetry reminiscent of another early work of dark and
sinister atmosphere, The Rape of Lucrece. It seems to
me that the most influential earlier play has not been
recognised by these critics. Echoes from Shakespeare's
Hamlet reverberate throughout Macbeth. These echoes
mainly concern the imagery in both plays. Later in
this chapter I will offer a detailed account of how Shak-
espeare used Hamlet as a source for imagery in Macbeth.

"Macbeth" and Holinshed

Comparing the imaginative language in Macbeth
with the language of the source passages in Holinshed is
not just a matter of identifying words and phrases in the
source that provided Shakespeare with hints on which he
built larger theme and imagery structures in his play.
There are, in fact, some remarkable instances of direct
influence by the historian on the dramatist. Although
Holinshed's Chronicles were supposed to be history, they
did not always adhere strictly to factual matter - a
feature inherited from the medieval chronicle writers
who rolled myths, legends, creations of their own minds,

and history, into one. Holinshed's imagination was not
kept wholly in abeyance during his writing: mythical and
supernatural material lent itself to personal reinter-
pretation. While the Holinshed passages drawn on for
Macbeth could never be described as rich in imagery, the
writer's imagination is not completely dormant. Language
occasionally has significance beyond mere reportage.

One of the conspicuous points of contact between
Holinshed's and Shakespeare's uses of words is their
application of euphemism when referring to murder[1].
Holinshed's technique is shown in the two passages follow-
ing, which are taken from the section on the murder of
King Duffe. Donwald's wife counselled him to kill the
king, or rather,

> ...to make him awaie, and shewed him the meanes
> whereby he might soonest accomplish it.
> Donwald thus being the more kindled in
> wrath by the words of his wife, determined to
> follow hir aduise in the execution of so hein-
> ous an act. Whervpon deuising with himselfe
> for a while, which way hee might best accomplish
> his curssed intent, at length gat opportunitie,
> and sped his purpose as followeth...
>
> Then Donwald, though he abhorred the act
> greatlie in heart, yet through instigation of
> his wife hee called foure of his seruants vnto
> him (whom he had made priuie to his wicked
> intent before, and had framed to his purpose

1. L.C. Knights discusses Shakespeare's use of euphemism
    in Some Shakesperean Themes, (London, 1959), p. 179,
    n. 11.

> with large gifts) and now declaring vnto them,
> after what sort they should worke the feat, they
> gladlie obeied his instructions and speedilie
> going about the murther, they enter the chamber
> ...[1]

The effect is quite striking. Donwald's nature,
like Macbeth's, wavers in contemplation of the murder,
and the euphemistic language reflects this reluctance to
come too near to the reality. However, once it is put
into the effective hands of the hired killers, "the
murther" is immediately called by its real name. Shakes-
peare follows Holinshed in his use of euphemism though he
extends its significance markedly in the play.

Macbeth hides from the reality of Duncan's
murder by employing euphemism. The reason he does this
is to keep himself sane. He learnt from his experience
on the heath that his imagination could produce very
real palpitations:

> ...why do I yield to that suggestion
> Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair,
> And make my seated heart knock at my ribs...?
> (1.3.134-6)[2]

To escape further "suggestions" he must keep out of
range of apt description, for the meaningful word has a

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1. W.G. Boswell-Stone, Shakespeare's Holinshed, (first
   published London 1896, reissued New York, 1966), p.
   27 and p.28. All references to Holinshed are from
   this edition, except where indicated in the passages
   excluded by Boswell-Stone.
2. All references to the Arden edition of Macbeth, ed.
   K. Muir, (London, 1967).

terrifying effect on his visual imagination, comparable

to the effect of the killing itself. He must use words

which are visually neutral. Thus he calls it "the deed"

(1.7.14 and 2.2.14) or "this terrible feat" (1.7.81) or

"this business" (1.7.31).

Lady Macbeth knows her husband's nature. She

would not frighten him off the murder she craves, so she

uses euphemism appropriately. She practises her technique

in soliloquy after receiving his letter in Act 1:

> 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
> Than wishest should be undone. Hie thee
> hither,
> That I may pour my spirits in thine ear...
> (1.5.22-6)

She knows the words to use in his seduction. The first

"that which" is the crown, the second is the murder which

must be committed to gain the crown. "Thus" and "do" are

the murder and the act of murder, and so on. She refers

euphemistically to the crown and the murder as "the

ornament of life" and "our great quell" (1.7.42,73) in

the calculated speeches by which she brings the wavering

Macbeth from his "We will proceed no further in this

business" (1.7.31) to "I am settled, and bend up Each

corporal agent to this terrible feat" (1.7.81-2).

On discovering the murder, Macduff shrieks "O

horror! horror! horror! Tongue nor heart cannot conceive,
nor name thee!" (2.3.64-5), but the reality of the situation
has to be faced, and Macduff does call it by its name -
"Most sacriligious Murther" (2.3.68). Irony now enters the
pattern. Macduff says to Lady Macbeth "O gentle lady,
'Tis not for you to hear what I can speak" (2.3.83-4), and
in the speeches following, Macbeth uses euphemistic metaphors
- "The wine of life is drawn", "the fountain of your blood
is stopped" - while Macduff faces the facts: "Your royal
father's murther'd".

Macbeth's euphemistic attitude is shown to be
allied with the evil forces in the play when he seeks out
the witches in Act 4. He asks them "What is't you do?";
they reply "A deed without a name." (4.1.49). The attitude
creating order and good will be the one which faces reality,
the one that upholds a truthful link between word and deed,
between intention and action. The end is near when Seyton
announces "The Queen, my Lord, is dead", to which Macbeth
replies:

> She should have died hereafter:
> There would have been a time for such a word.
> (5.5.17-8)

Macbeth expresses the vain hope that the ordered society
where word and deed stand in a healthy relationship might
have come about during his own and his wife's lifetimes.
But this ideal could not be gained by methods opposed to the

ideal. Macbeth's life has been "a tale ... full of sound and fury, Signifying nothing". His words have not matched his deeds, he has treated truth and reality with irreverence. It only remains for Macduff, the man who put the proper name to the deed after Duncan's murder, to carve through the falsity between word and action which has led to so great a part of Macbeth's chaotic success. "I have no words," says Macduff before killing Macbeth, "My voice is in my sword." (5.8.5-6). Word and deed are matched perfectly, the time is freed of falsity, order is restored.

The problem of order inherent in the Macbeth story revealed itself in the language used by the historian and the dramatist in two basically similar ways. Both writers utilised animal/man comparisons, and both used images of unnatural universal occurrence. Holinshed describes Makbeth as "cruel in nature" (p.18)[1], and says he has "sharpe sight like vnto Lynx, and long ears like vnto Midas" (p.36). In his reign Makbeth brings down the "most heauie yoke of thraldome" (p.37) on his subjects, and he says of the offending Makduffe: "'I perceiue this man will neuer obeie my commandements, till he be ridden with a snaffle'" (p.35).

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1. Page references to Boswell-Stone, op. cit.

While attempting to climb the ladder of being to the position of sovereignty, Shakespeare's Macbeth actually descends to the level of beastliness. In his early self-questioning, Macbeth stated: "I dare do all that may become a man" (1.7.46).[1] His wife's reply is "What beast was't then, That made you break this enterprise to me?". As Macbeth's beastliness continues to grow he drags the country down with him, in the same way as did the source Makbeth: "Our country sinks beneath the yoke" (4.3.39), complains Malcolm. Macbeth uses the "valu'd file" of the chain of being to classify the men in his state, but his misplaced values cause him to select a metaphor which reduces rather than enhances the men's position on the scale:

> First Murderer.   We are men, my Liege.
> Macbeth.   Ay, in the catalogue ye go for men;
>   As hounds, and greyhounds, mongrels, spaniels,
>   curs...
>   All by the name of dogs: the valu'd file
> Distinguishes...

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1. Cf. Holinshed's description of King Duffe in a passage not included by Boswell-Stone. After recovering from a sickness occasioned by the craft of the witches of Fores, he "was able to doo anie maner of thing that lay in man to doo" (Furness, ed. New Variorum Edition of Macbeth, Appendix, p. 381). This probably suggested the line in the play, though Shakespeare has changed the context to fit with his theme of manliness. For an excellent study of the animal/man imagery and its relation to other image patterns in the play, see Cleanth Brooks, "The Naked Babe and the Cloak of Manliness" in The Well Wrought Urn, (London, 1960), pp. 17-39.

                              ...every one
     According to the gift which bounteous Nature
     Hath in him clos'd; whereby he does receive
     Particular addition, from the bill
     That writes them all alike; and so of men.
                         (3.1.90-100)

The use of correspondence between one level of being and
another is legitimate practice in the forming of metaphors,
but the early seventeenth-century user had to be careful
that the correspondence did not point out an identifying
relationship he did not mean to communicate. The murderers
are wise to the comparison's effectiveness, but not to its
effect. Although they take it that he is testing them as
men, Macbeth aligns them with animals. His intention was
not to do this, but his beastliness has coloured his
language. He could just as easily have drawn the metaphor
from the many levels and orders of angels, but he didn't.
He eventually sees himself and his situation in wholly
animal terms:

     They have tied me to a stake: I cannot fly,
     But, bear-like, I must fight the course.
                         (5.7.1-2)

Pity and admiration for the trapped animal are twentieth-
century reactions to this image. For the Macbeth audience
the bear was, at last, in its right place. The tragedy
is not that of a trapped bear being killed, but of a man
becoming a bear.

     An extremely interesting point that does not have

its share of critical attention in source studies of

<u>Macbeth</u> concerns Shakespeare's exclusion of an important

passage in Holinshed from a scene which otherwise follows

the source almost word for word. I refer to the first 138

lines of Act 4, scene 3, where Malcolm and Macduff meet in

England. Source critics have commented on the closeness

of the scene's speeches to Holinshed's dialogue[1], but they

fail to mention the notable exclusion. It occurs in

Holinshed during Malcolme's speech on his pretended avarice,

which begins:

> "...if I were king, I should seek so manie waies
> to get lands and goods, that I would slea the
> most part of all the nobles of Scotland by
> surmized accusations, to the end I might inioy
> their lands, goods, and possessions;..."[2]

The corresponding point in the play is where Malcolm says:

> were I king,
> I should cut off the nobles for their lands;
> Desire his jewels, and this other's house...
> (4.3.78-80)

Holinshed originally continued Malcolme's speech thus:

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1. See M.C. Bradbrook, "The Sources of <u>Macbeth</u>",
    <u>Shakespeare Survey</u>, No. 4, (1951), p. 35.
2. Boswell-Stone, <u>op. cit.</u>, p. 38. Allardyce and Josephine
    Nicoll (<u>Holinshed's Chronicle as used in Shakespeare's
    Plays</u>, London, 1963, p.221) also omit the passage.
    Muir (p. 184) and Furness (p. 391) print the passage in
    full in the appendices to their editions of the play.

"...and therefore to shew you what mischiefe
may insue on you through mine vnsatiable
couetousnes, I will rehearse vnto you a fable.
There was a fox hauing a sore place on him
[sic] ouerset with a swarme of flies, that
continuallie sucked out hir bloud: and when
one that came by and saw this manner, demanded
whether she would haue the flies driuen beside hir,
she answered no: for if these flies that are
alreadie full, and by reason thereof sucke not
verie egerlie, should be chased awaie, other
that are emptie and fellie an hungred, should
light in their places, and sucke out the
residue of my bloud farre more to my greeuance
than these, which now being satisfied doo not
much annoie me."[1]

Shakespeare substituted for this passage the following lines:

...my more-having would be as a sauce
To make me hunger more.
                              (4.3.81-2)

There is a correlation between the meaning of the "fable"

and the meaning of Shakespeare's "appetite" image, but the

dramatist took nothing from the "fable" itself. His image

is based on the food associations derived from Holinshed's

use of the words "vnsatiable couetousnes". The essential

difference between the fable as a "hunger" image and

Shakespeare's "hunger" image lies in the fact that the

dramatist changed the perspective, making Malcolm the

central figure in the image, whereas the nobles of Scot-

land were represented by the central figure in the histor-

ian's image. The "fable" gives the nobles' reactions to

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1. Appendix A, <u>Macbeth</u>, ed. K. Muir, p. 184.

Malcolme's avarice, whereas Shakespeare's image gives
Malcolm's reaction to his own avarice. The idea behind
the two figures is the same: the future king is making him-
self out to be as bad as the present one. But the two
expressions of this idea are not the same.

Why did not shakespeare use the fox and flies
in a dialogue which is otherwise so close to the original?
There are two facets to the answer. He did not want to
attach low animal associations to Malcolm, and he did
not want these associations to digress away from Macbeth
contexts. A perfectly valid point here is that Shakes-
peare might have made Malcolm's pretence seem more real if
he temporarily gave him the use of imagery usually
associated with Macbeth. The bleeding fox and the surfeited
flies were particularly apt imagery for characterising a
Macbeth-figure, considering how blood, ravenous animals,
and deadly flying creatures are elsewhere used in association
with Macbeth's actions and thoughts.

I think here we have a recognisable example of
Shakespeare as conscious master over his imagery. While
composing and using images he kept continually in mind the
effect they would have on the audience. Here he had to
choose between inclusion of a clever transference of
character traits by imagery, or its exclusion on the grounds
that the imagery ran the risk of confusing the audience

since it broke an established pattern. Shakespeare did
not want to divert the audience's attention away from the
organic relationship between Macbeth and the imagery which
surrounded him. The association of bestiality and blood-
iness with Macbeth was too valid an association to be
played with lightly. Macbeth belonged to this imagery,
Malcolm did not. The feature of Malcolm's speech in this
scene that saves him from incrimination by his Macbeth-
like pose is that he does not descend to the state of mind
which is identified by the kind of imaginative language
used by Shakespeare, although the two descriptions immediately
linked with Macbeth throughout the play.

Another aspect of the imaginative language
related to the problem of order wherein Shakespeare was
influenced by Holinshed was the historian's descriptions
of unnatural portents after the murder of King Duffe.
These are the related passages:

> Monstrous sights also that were seene within
> the Scotish kingdome that yeere were these:
> horsses in Louthian, being of singular beautie
> and swiftnesse, did eate their owne flesh, and
> would in no wise taste anie other meate. In
> Angus there was a gentlewoman brought foorth a
> child without eies, nose, hand, or foot. There
> was a sparhawke also strangled by an owle.
> Neither was it anie lesse woonder that the
> sunne, as before is said, was continuallie
> couered with clouds for six moneths space.
> But all men vnderstood that the abhominable
> murther of King Duffe was the cause heereof.[1]

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1. The quotation is from Muir's edition of the play,
    Appendix A, (p. 172). Boswell-Stone excludes the
    gentlewoman's child.

> Rosse.   ...by th' clock 'tis day,
>   And yet dark night strangles the travelling lamp...
> Old Man.   'Tis unnatural,
>   Even like the deed that's done. On Tuesday last,
>   A falcon towering in her pride of place,
>   Was by a mousing owl hawk'd at, and kill'd.
> Rosse.   And Duncan's horses (a thing most strange
>   and certain)
>   Beauteous and swift, the minions of their race,
>   Turn'd wild in nature, broke their stalls,
>   flung out,
>   Contending 'gainst obedience, as they would make
>   War with mankind.
> Old Man.   'Tis said, they eat each other.
> Rosse. They did so.
>   (2.4.6-7, 10-19)

The description of the gentlewoman's child was not
used by Shakespeare, although the two descriptions immediately
before and after it were. This is all the more surprising
considering that there are well developed imagery patterns
in the play concerning not only animals and birds, but also
new-born babes. The reason Shakespeare did use Holinshed's
horses and birds, and not his new-born babe, lies in the
fact that the former two fitted the animal and bird patterns
already established at this point in the play, while the
latter did not fit the new-born babe pattern.

Here again we have an example of Shakespeare as
conscious master over his use of imagery. As with the
Malcolm-Macduff scene, Shakespeare's omission must have
been a conscious decision, because his perfect knowledge
of the source details immediately surrounding the excluded
passage makes it obvious that he transposed these scenes
straight from the source book. Thus faulty memory cannot

account for the omission. Neither does the argument of
censorship work here. An audience who could take Lady
Macbeth's plucking of her nipple from the boneless gums
of her child, and then dashing its brains out, could with-
out doubt survive the mention of a truncated, deformed
infant. Shakespeare left it out simply because it did not
belong in the play. Notions of order and disorder certain-
ly did belong in the play, but Shakespeare was not using the
new-born babe imagery to amplify them. This was, however,
one of the functions he gave to the animal and bird imagery.

In the scenes before Act 2 scene 4 animals are
associated with disordering influences when the witches
answer the familiars who croak and mew to them (1.1.8-9).
Then the wolf and the rat are linked with the unnatural
phenomena of murder and witchcraft, heralding events that
are soon to happen in the play (1.3.9; 2.1.53). The
bleeding Captain asserts the natural ascendancy of Macbeth
and Banquo over the invaders and rebels by saying that the
two Captains were as frightened of the enemy as the lion
is of the hare (1.2.35). Similarly, bird imagery is used
to point out natural and unnatural notions. In the same
context as the example mentioned above, the Captain
compares Macbeth's and Banquo's dismay to that experienced
by eagles when confronted with sparrows (1.2.35). Lady
Macbeth, pondering on the fatal entrance of Duncan into

her castle, notices that the raven, foreboder of death and
inhabitor of infected places, himself is hoarse from croaking,
an indication of the unnaturally foul atmosphere of doom
within the castle (1.5.38). This is contrasted with the
innocently natural perceptions of Banquo and King Duncan
who see only the temple-haunting martlet installed around
the castle walls (1.6.4). Duncan's murder is then performed
to the accompaniment of the screeching owl, "the fatal
bellman" (2.2.3; 2.3.61).

Thus the images of disorder in the Rosse-Old Man
dialogue, culled directly from Holinshed, fitted perfectly
with Shakespeare's established patterns[1]. The notion of the
falcon, towering in her pride of place, being killed by a
mousing owl, was in direct contrast to the bleeding Captain's
eagles and sparrows: the former portrayed Macbeth upholding
order, the latter showed him reduced in moral status (he no
longer corresponds to the eagle, but to the mousing owl) and
committing disordering actions. Similarly, the horses break-
ing the natural order by attempting destruction of mankind

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1. The possibility that Holinshed's descriptions may have
   been the starting points for Shakespeare's bird and
   animal image patterns makes no difference to the argument.
   Indeed it strengthens it. However, if Shakespeare
   originally took the idea of the new-born babe from this
   passage in Holinshed, he recast the concept to such an
   extent that the original could no longer be included.
   But I do not believe Holinshed was the original
   inspiration for the pattern. (See my discussion later
   regarding the influence of Hamlet on the imagery in
   Macbeth, pp. 92-108).

and themselves, is in direct contrast to "heaven's Cherubins, hors'd Upon the sightless couriers of the air" (1.7.22-3), invoked by Macbeth in the self-questioning soliloquy where the anti-destructive elements of his better nature get a temporary hold on him.

Mention of these lines brings us back to the naked new-born babe. This pattern of images has two functions. One is to point out, by contrast with the theme of manliness, Macbeth's loss of mature human values; the other is to keep the audience in contact with the life-force, the ongoing human regenerative process that the Macbeths try in vain to stifle[1]. Shakespeare made the essential value of the babe its human value. It could have its brains dashed out, or it could be strangled in birth (4.1.30), for these were effected by external factors and did not deny the babe's essential power and perfection. But it could not be deformed, for such a mangling showed faults and disorder in the regenerative process itself. The pattern carried the major force for good in the play - man's sacred right to live and grow.

As Macbeth predicted in his "Pity, like a naked new-born babe" speech, the human response to the suffering occasioned by his evil deeds eventually grows to strength,

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1. See Cleanth Brooks, "The Naked Babe and the Cloak of Manliness" in <u>The Well Wrought Urn</u>, (London, 1949), pp. 17-39.

rallies its forces, and destroys him. The apparitions
of the "bloody child" and the "child crowned with a tree
in his hand" symbolised the human will to survive and the
human desire to live in ordered harmony. The man who
snatched the sceptre knowing that in doing so he made it
barren, and who craved that all time's processes might
stop to allow him to fulfil a selfish ambition, after
a brief and dreadful reign, was deservedly crushed by the
great onward-moving process of nature he tried to defy.
The life-process inevitably triumphs over its enemies[1].
Thus the deformed babe could not take part in Macbeth.
This was not so because Shakespeare was escaping from a
reality that might smash his thesis, but because the
deformed babe was a confusing exception to the universal
rule he wished to portray.

Other passages in Holinshed may have provided
hints for Shakespeare's imaginative language. The theme
of sleeplessness in Macbeth was derived from two incidents
Shakespeare found near the Makbeth story in the Chronicles.

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1. Wilson Knight devotes a chapter of The Imperial Theme
   (London, 1961), pp. 125-53, to "life themes" in Macbeth.
   He shows how the language of the play contains the
   essential conflict between forces of life and death in
   myriad levels of contrast and opposition, dissolving
   finally into the ordered sequence promised by the last
   scene.

The first involved King Duffe, who could "not sleepe in
the night time by anie prouocations" (p. 22) because he
was under the power of the witches of Fores. The second
concerned Kenneth, who poisoned Duffe's son Malcolme and
afterwards heard a voice which promised his destruction
and caused him to pass "that night without anie sleepe
comming in his eies" (p. 30). After he has killed Duncan,
the play Macbeth hears a voice cry "Macbeth does murther
Sleep" (2.2.35), and from that point on guilty stirrings
of the imagination plague Lady Macbeth's rest, while
Macbeth lacks "the season of all natures" until the point
where he says to Lady Macbeth:

> Come, we'll go to sleep. My strange and self-
> abuse
> Is the initiate fear, that wants hard use.
> (3.4.140-1)

Here he is not suffering to the extent he had been suffering
when he said "O! full of scorpions is my mind, dear wife"
(3.2.36), for at this earlier point the threat of Banquo
as the father of many kings loomed large in his mind.
Between these two points in the play, Macbeth has had
Banquo killed, learned that Fleance escaped, confronted
a ghost, and come to the decision that he is now into the
business so deeply he cannot turn back.

The conflict in his mind is quelled: not because
his conscience is satisfied, but because it is denied; not
because he no longer fears the consequences of his original

foul deed, but because he is devoted to any number of
equally foul deeds he may have to commit in the future to
protect his present position. He wilfully embraces death
and destruction, hardening his heart against love and reason.
In Christian eyes, he has become spiritually dead. It is
quite possible that Macbeth begins to sleep again at this
point (i.e. after 3.4.140), for sleep is "death's counter-
feit" (2.3.77), and "the dead" are the only ones who sleep
well (3.2.19-23), though the dejected, wasted shell of a
man who appears in Act 5 is obviously not a Macbeth who
has derived any nourishment from "great Nature's second
course" (2.2.38). What is certain, however, is that this
point corresponds to the beginning of the phase of
abominable cruelty which keeps all Scotland sleepless
(3.6.34). In the apparition scene Macbeth thinks that
the witches promise he will be unvanquishable, and the
terms in which he expresses his delight are significant:

> I may tell pale-hearted fear it lies,
> And sleep in spite of thunder.
> (4.1.85-6)

Macbeth is now impervious not only to censure by his own
mind, but even to the judgment and wrath of God who speaks
in the thunder. With the insensitivity of the dead and the
damned, he will sleep through the clamour his deeds have
caused in the heavens.

The likeness of death and sleep is referred to
a number of times during the play. In addition to the
lines already quoted, there is Lady Macbeth's "The sleeping,
and the dead, Are but as pictures" (2.2.52-3), Macbeth's
"Now o'er the one half-world Nature seems dead" (2.1.49-50),
and his later "Sleep...The death of each day's life"
(2.2.36-7). Shakespeare may have been reminded of this
common metaphor by Holinshed's description of the Danes
who beseiged Duncan in the castle of Bertha, where they
fell for a Scottish trick and were drugged "through all
parts of their bodies, that they were in the end brought in-
to a fast dead sleepe, that in manner it was vnpossible to
wake them"[1].

Another passage in Holinshed which may have
provided suggestions for Shakespeare's imaginative language
concerns the chain of "blood" references in the play. After
Donwald has had Duffe killed, (this section was the major
source for details of the play Macbeth's murder of Duncan),
the murderers sneak the body out of the castle to a place a
couple of miles distant where they

> turne the course of a little riuer running through
> the fields there, and digging a deepe hole in the
> chanell, they burie the bodie in the same, ramming
> it vp with stones and grauell so closelie, that set-
> ting the water in the right course againe, no man
> could perceiue that anie thing had been newlie
> digged there. This they did by order appointed

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1. K. Muir, ed. Macbeth, Appendix A, p. 176.

them by Donwald as is reported, for that the
bodie should not be found and by bleeding
(when Donwald should be present) declare him
to be guiltie of the murther. For such an
opinion men haue, that <u>the dead corps of anie
man being slaine, will bleed abundantlie if
the murtherer be present.</u>[1]

Shakespeare, thinking on the possibilities of this incident,

would have seen that if the belief were true Duffe's body

would have bled into the flowing water should Donwald have

ventured near the river. This notion may lie behind the

dramatist's recollection of the lines from Seneca[2] usually

quoted as the source for "Making the green one red"

(2.2.62). At any rate, a river of blood image occurs

just ten lines after the mention of "The secret'st man of

blood" (3.4.125) who is incriminated by the bleeding corpse,

for which Shakespeare is undoubtedly indebted to this passage

from Holinshed. Macbeth says:

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

The sentence describing the bringing forth of the "secret'st

man of blood" begins

> It will have blood, they say: blood will have
>   blood:
> Stones have been known to move...
> (3.4.121-2)

While the major reference is probably to the Bible[3], it is

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1. Boswell-Stone, p. 28.
2. See later discussion, pp. 81-2.
3. See later discussion, pp. 85-7.

interesting to note that this fits in with the Holinshed passage. The idea of the stones ramming up the body in the river bed being forced apart by the supernaturally induced flow of blood on approach of the murderer is potentially inherent in the source.

The main issue involved in this source passage is one of identity. The bleeding of the corpse identifies the murderer. Part of Shakespeare's chain of blood references is devoted to this concept. The bringing forth of the "secret'st man of blood" is the central occurrence, but it is supported by several others. In planning the murder, the Macbeths plot the identification of the chamberlains as the killers by having them "mark'd with blood" (1.7.76)[1], and after the murder is committed Lennox speaks of them as being "badg'd with blood" (2.3.102). The Macbeth audience would have understood the word "badg'd" in heraldic terms where, with a much stronger sense than is used in the twentieth-century, it referred to a device which immediately identified a specific group or family whose members had achieved special status. The false identification is carried over to Donalbain and Malcolm, who flee because "the near in blood, The nearer

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1. This differs from the source where the chamberlains are identified as the 'murderers' by their possession of the keys to the gate through which the real murderers convey the body.

bloody" (2.4.140-1) and who are later accused of the
murder when Macbeth in public calls them "our bloody
cousins" (3.1.29). The false witness of the Macbeths
painting others bloody is juxtaposed with the incrimin-
ating evidence on their own persons. Lady Macbeth refers
to the "filthy witness" on her husband's hands after the
murder (2.2.46), and later, in her sleep-walking scene,
she screams "Out damned spot!" (5.1.34), which Shakes-
peare probably meant as a reference to the belief that
witches were identified by an irremovable spot on their
bodies, along with the reference to her identity as a
murderer.

The Macbeths pervert the blood-identity concept
in their lust for power. Holinshed's blood-identity
passage describes a supernatural force for good, an
ordering principle which brings murderers to justice. The
Macbeths use the same technique for evil purposes, and in
doing so, they divert attention away from the real
identifying marks which would show them up for what they
are. They try to dam back "The spring, the head, the
fountain,...the very source" (2.3.98-9) of the blood of
the rightful Scottish kings, but the river could only be
diverted from its natural course for a limited period of
time. The digression from order ceases with the reinstate-
ment of Malcolm, whose sovereign right is identified by

nothing more nor less than the blood in his veins.

From the foregoing arguments it is plain that Shakespeare's imaginative language was influenced by the language in his major source. The arguments concerned with the euphemistic, animal, and child imagery show Shakespeare reacting directly to Holinshed as a source for imaginative language. The cases of the sleep, blood, and river imagery demonstrate a suggestive influence by Holinshed, a rather less direct influence which nevertheless revealed itself in specific instances. In later discussion concerned with Seneca, I want to examine another kind of influence which did not produce many specific parallels but did produce a widespread general effect - a tone, an atmosphere - in the imaginative language of Macbeth.

The Plant Imagery in "Macbeth"

Before I continue with the Senecan influence, I want to look at a second chronicle source likely to have been used by Shakespeare. Various reasons suggest that he consulted Leslie's De Origine, Moribus, et Rebus Gestis Scotorum and Buchanan's Rerum Scoticarum Historia in addition to Holinshed.[1] While the texts of these works

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1. See K. Muir, Shakespeare's Sources, pp. 169-75. The relevant passages from these two works are printed in Appendices B and C of the Arden edition of Macbeth, ed. K. Muir.

had little effect on the imagery in <u>Macbeth</u>, a feature of Leslie's book does seem to have influenced Shakespeare's writing in a way important to the present study. I refer to the wood-cut printed in Leslie's volume which shows a diagrammatical representation of the geneological line of the Scottish kings from Banquo to James VI. The cut, like many others of the time, shows the family line in the form of a tree, with the names of the heirs in successive generations contained in balloons up the tree trunk.

H.N. Paul pointed out the relationship between this particular diagram and <u>Macbeth</u>:

> The poet's eye, struck by this pictorial showing of the Stuart line, allowed it to create the imagery used by him in Acts II and IV.
> Banquo (3.1.5) rephrases the prophesy concerning his children as he sees himself "the <u>root</u> and father of many kings". Macbeth's fears stick deep (are deeply rooted) in Banquo (3.1.49) because he is to be "father to a <u>line of kings</u>" ("series perpetuo filo contexta") [the quote is from Leslie]. The tree of Banquo in the cut bears not only leaves and flowers but globular fruit eight of which united in a direct line are crowned; and Macbeth sees that he has murdered Banquo only to make these "<u>seeds</u>" of Banquo kings. Macbeth's thwarted ambition imagines the serpentine trunk of the tree as drawn in the cut to be a "snake" he cannot kill (3.2.13), or a serpent (3.4.28). ... And finally in the fourth Act it is a show of eight (not nine) kings, for the title of the cut speaks of a series "<u>octo posteriorum regum</u>".[1]

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1. H.N. Paul, "The Imperial Theme in <u>Macbeth</u>" in <u>Adams Memorial Studies</u>, ed. McManaway, et al, (1948), p. 263. The wood-cut is printed here facing p. 260.

Basically Paul's idea is good, though his statements are not well documented. First of all, it does not seem fair to say "Macbeth's thwarted ambition imagines the serpentine trunk of the tree as drawn in the cut to be a 'snake' he cannot kill". Unfortunately, Paul's syntax suggests that Macbeth saw the cut, which is, of course, absurd.   Paul could not have meant this, but he still does not emphasise that the effect has, indeed, been on Shakespeare's imagination. Apart from this, Paul does not supply enough information to justify his statement. I believe that this diagram was not the sole source for the imagery Paul mentions, rather it triggered Shakespeare's memory to recall various other diagrams like it, whose total influence is reflected in the imagery. Paul's statement about the tree looking like a snake is only justifiable when it is noted that in the writing of this play, with its Fall theme where Macbeth and his wife parallel Adam and Eve[1], Shakespeare would have been naturally led to associate Leslie's tree with the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil in the Genesis story. The tree of Banquo's line was as fatal to Macbeth as was the Garden of Eden tree to Adam. Shakespeare would have been reminded of various

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1. See H.R. Coursen, "In Deepest Consequence: Macbeth", Shakespeare Quarterly, Vol. 18, (1967), pp. 375-88.

pictures showing Adam and Eve beside the Tree with the
serpent wound around the trunk and with its head peeping
through the foliage tempting Eve to the fruit.[1] The same
pictorial representation lies behind emblem book illustrat-
ions of the serpent twined up a plant's stem and hiding
beneath its leaves.[2] This concept was undoubtedly in
Shakespeare's mind while he was writing this play, for
Lady Macbeth says to her husband: "look like th' innocent
flower, But be the serpent under 't" (1.5.64-5). So Paul's
statement about the serpent and the tree, when made to
look a little less bald, is reasonably attractive.

Similarly, Paul's gloss of "stick deep" as
"deeply rooted" is rather bold while it lacks supporting
evidence. When Macbeth says:

> Our fears in Banquo
> Stick deep, and in his royalty of nature
> Reigns that which would be fear'd, (3.1.48-50)

there is nothing in the immediate context to suggest that
Shakespeare did not mean "stick deep" to refer to the
thorns of a plant, rather than the root (as was Wilson's

1. Woodcut prints depicting this scene were common in
   popular religious literature of the Elizabethan era and
   probably derived from Durer's masterful engraving of
   The Fall of Man (1504). Durer's prints were widely
   distributed and copied in England during Henry VIII's
   reign.
2. See G. Whitney, A Choice of Emblemes, (1586), p. 24,
   "Latet anguis in herba", where the plant is a straw-
   berry plant. For the belief that this was one of the
   plants in the Garden of Eden see L.J. Ross, "The Mean-
   ing of Strawberries in Shakespeare", Studies in the
   Renaissance, Vol. 7, (1960), pp. 225-40.

opinion).[1]   There is equal reason to believe that Shakespeare was referring to the teeth of a snake. Macbeth uses the snake metaphor to describe his fear of Banquo and the promised royal line of the Stuarts on two occasions (3.2.13-5; 3.4.28-30). Both times the snake's tooth is focused on. Although this suggestion is attractive, the facts nevertheless seem to point to acceptance of Paul's statement. Shakespeare uses "stick deep" elsewhere in Macbeth, and here it does refer to the root of a plant:

This avarice
Sticks deeper, grows with more pernicious root
Than summer-seeming lust.
(4.3.84-6)

The major point I wish to raise with reference to Paul's observations concerns his limiting of the influence of the Banquo tree to the imagery in Acts 3 and 4. Actually, plant imagery is associated with notions of kingship through-out the play, and the pattern becomes especially interesting in Act 4 where the tree associations are transferred from Banquo to Malcolm as the threat to Macbeth's retention of the sovereignty changes focus from the future the witches promised Banquo to the present design undertaken by Malcolm. Act 1 shows Banquo learning the royal future of his family tree when he asks the witches to "look into the

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1. See footnote, Macbeth, ed. K. Muir, p. 77.

seeds of time" (1.3.58). Soon after, King Duncan says to

Macbeth:

> I have begun to plant thee, and will labour
> To make thee full growing, (1.4.28-9)

but it is Banquo who picks up the plant metaphor, replying

to Duncan's "let me infold thee, And hold thee to my

heart" with "There if I grow, The harvest is your own"

(1.4.31-3).

At this point I would like to mention another

type of diagram which Shakespeare remembered through

seeing Leslie's wood-cut. This is the geneological tree

as represented to be growing from the body of the founder

of the family line. Examples of this occur on the title-

pages of John Stow's Annales of England (1592) and the

Booke of Christian Prayers printed by John Daye in 1578[1].

The first of these depicts the line of English monarchs

from Edward III to Elizabeth. Edward lies at the bottom

of the picture with the trunk of the tree growing out of

his body. Similarly, in the Christian Prayers wood-cut

the line of the House of David is shown to have its roots,

literally, in Jesse, recumbent at the bottom of the

diagram. In both these pictures the founder of the line

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1. For reproductions of these two cuts see Plates IX and
X in R.A. Fraser, Shakespeare's Poetics, (London,
1962).

takes the place of the root system of the tree. Leslie's
picture, however, does not show Banquo lying in this
position: his name is superimposed on the trunk of the
tree, with the roots extending below. But at least one
image in the play shows that Shakespeare thought of
Banquo's relation to the tree in pictorial terms similar
to those displayed in the wood-cuts from Stow and
Christian Prayers: Banquo sees himself as "the root and
father Of many kings" (3.1.5-6). Also, where Duncan says
"let me infold thee, And hold thee to my heart" (1.4.31-2),
Shakespeare was thinking of the royal trees growing from
bodies of kings in the diagrams, and allows Banquo to
answer accordingly: "There if I grow, The harvest is your
own" (1.4.32-3).

Throughout the play, the plant imagery associated
with Macbeth is either autumnal or corrupt. Duncan had
promised to make Macbeth "full of growing", but after he
cuts off this source of nourishment, Macbeth finds he has
"fall'n into the sere, the yellow leaf" (5.3.23) and
placed on his own head "a fruitless crown" (3.1.60). When
Malcolm sees that Macbeth is "ripe for shaking" (4.3.238),
he launches the attack which frees the land from the
tyrant who caused good men's lives to expire even before
the flowers in their caps sickened (4.3.171-3). From
early in the play Macbeth is not the innocent flower, but

the serpent under it (1.5.64-5), and the only seed-sowing
he participates in during his reign, is the positioning of
Banquo's murderers: "I will advise you where to plant
yourselves", he says (1.3.128).

During the banquet scene, when Banquo's ghost
appears to Macbeth, his wife ridicules his behaviour by
saying: "When all's done, You look but on a stool" (3.4.66-7).
Is it possible Shakespeare has submerged a tree image in
these words? If so, Lady Macbeth's unconscious pun on
"stool" sums up the situation precisely. A meaning of
"stool" current in Shakespeare's time referred to "The
stump of a tree which has been felled; also the head of the
stump from which new shoots are produced"[1]. Macbeth has
tried to destroy the Stuart family tree by having Banquo,
along with his first offshoot, Fleance, cut down. However,
Banquo's son has escaped: the stump and roots still live
in the new shoot. Though the tree is cut down it is
potentially the same tree; the death of Banquo has not
stopped the future growth of the Stuart line, and the danger
that was inherent in Banquo continues to haunt Macbeth's
mind. Macbeth does indeed look on a stool, and that is
what troubles him.

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1. SOED, Stool, sb. 9.a.

In accordance with the demands of the play, in Act 4 the uncorrupted and fertile plant imagery is transferred from Banquo to Malcolm, who now poses the main threat in Macbeth's mind to his holding of the throne. In the apparition scene Malcolm is depicted as "a child crowned with a tree in his hand", and he blossoms to be "the sovereign flower" bedewed with the blood of the battle that wipes out "the weeds" in the garden of Scotland (5.2.30), leaving the ground clear for Malcolm to continue where his father left off and do those things "Which would be planted newly with the time" (5.9.31). The irony of Macbeth's words in the apparition scene is now obvious. After hearing that he will reign unconquered till Birnam wood comes to Dunsinane, he delightedly cries:

> that will never be:
> Who can impress the forest; bid the tree
> Unfix his earth-bound root?
> (4.1.94-6)

Interpreted in the light of the terms in which notions of kingship are expressed throughout the play, Macbeth is unwittingly acknowledging the impossibility of his ambition to keep the sovereignty. The royal line is rooted in Banquo. The divine right in the succession of kings (which Shakespeare knew was a pet belief of James I) was like one of the laws of nature: it could not be wrenched from its

proper course.[1]

Senecan Imagery in "Macbeth"

Earlier in this chapter I observed that the imaginative language in Macbeth was influenced in a general way by Shakespeare's familiarity with the works of Seneca.[2] From the Roman master Shakespeare derived a mood, or an essential attitude, which expressed itself in a particular kind of declamatory verse. A feature of this verse was its use of images of horror which appealed to the visual imagination, through which an immediate sense of evil was aroused

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1. For studies of the relationship between this play and the attitudes of James I, see K. Muir, Shakespeare's Sources, Vol. 1, pp. 177-9, and H.N. Paul, The Royal Play of "Macbeth", (New York, 1950).
2. Others who have considered Seneca's influence on the texture of Macbeth are K. Muir, Shakespeare's Sources, Vol. 1, pp. 180-3; F.L. Lucas, Seneca and Elizabethan Tragedy, (Cambridge, 1922), pp. 119-23; J.W. Cuncliffe, The Influence of Seneca on Elizabethen Tragedy, (London, 1893); H.N. Paul, The Royal Play of Macbeth", (New York, 1950) - Paul calls it "the most Senecan of all Shakespeare's plays" (p. 48); I-S. Ewbank, "The Fiend-like Queen: A note on Macbeth and Seneca's Medea", Shakespeare Survey, Vol. 19, (1966), pp. 180-3; and J.M. Nosworthy, "The Bleeding Captain Scene in Macbeth", Review of English Studies, Vol. 22, (1946), pp. 126-30. These works point out many similarities between Macbeth and Senecan passages, though few direct borrowings have been found. A different view is expressed in A.D. Godley, "Senecan Tragedy", in English Literature and the Classics, ed. C.S. Gordon, (Oxford, 1912), pp. 228-46. Godley says Senecan ideas were so common in Elizabethan times Shakespeare need not have read any Seneca. However, it seems more likely that a conscientious Elizabethan dramatist would have read Seneca, at least in one or other of the available translations.

in the emotions of the hearers. This powerful imaginative
language did away with the necessity for much of the action
and most of the props in Senecan drama. It accounted for
the success of choric drama since the violent stimulation
of the mind which resulted from highly charged poetry
produced an emotional effect equal in magnitude, though
different in kind, to the visual experience of physical
action. In a play that overlaps with Senecan stage practice
at a number of points (for example, off-stage killings and
the appearance of a ghost), Shakespeare found occasion to
utilise the Senecan brand of imaginative language in con-
juring the required atmosphere of evil and suspense which
surrounds the actions of the Macbeths.

The Senecan works most influential on Macbeth
were the Agamemnon, Hercules Furens, and Medea. In the
Agamemnon, a passionate and violent woman conspires with
her lover to kill the king. They commit the murder and
also seek to slay the king's son. He escapes, however,
and returns to kill the man and woman who murdered his
father. Hercules Furens portrays a valiant warrior who,
having returned from a descent into hell, finds his
country seized by a tyrant. He kills the usurper and
thinks to destroy the usurper's wife and children as well,
but in his excited mental state he mistakes his own wife
and children for the tyrant's family. He sleeps off the

mad fit and wakes to view his deed with responses of horror, guilt, and finally, suicide. The Medea concerns a woman who practises the art of witchcraft, invoking demonic powers to aid her in her projected murders. She kills her king and his daughter, then slays her own child before her husband's eyes. It is obvious these plays provided Shakespeare with a number of parallels relating to the emotional situations of the main characters in Macbeth, though Seneca's influence, rather than expressing itself in any specific incidents or dialogue, filtered down through the imagery in the play, clustering itself around the Macbeths and the witches, but hovering through the air in the rest of the play as well.

In citing the echoes from these plays, I must limit myself to a selection from occurrences in Seneca and Shakespeare characteristic of the particular theme in hand. It will be obvious that further examination of the language beyond recording of the parallels is unnecessary. Shakespeare's use of this imagery was largely for the purpose of adding atmosphere: its effect was immediate and its meaning easily grasped. The Senecan mood was what Shakespeare wanted to capture, hence the success of this imaginative language lay not so much in what each individual occurrence meant but in how and where they were scattered through the play and the way these scattered echoes linked together.

The language Shakespeare used in association with witchcraft, light and darkness, the sea and ship-wrecks, bloody hands, and universal disorder, bears the mark of Senecan influence. Here are some examples from Seneca on witchcraft. I give the line number to comparable Macbeth quotations in brackets after each Senecan quotation. Medea calls on "Hecate that sendest forth thy light, Unto thy silent sacrifice that offered is by night" (cf. 2.1.51-2), and in her conjuring scenes she "unjoynted limmes in boyling Caldron put" (cf. 4.1.30), as well as "a wallowing serpent huge" with "forked tongue" (cf. 4.1.16), "corn" that "was cropt" (cf. 4.1.55) "in deepe of silent night" (cf. 4.1.25), "filthy byrdes...the heart of Owle", and "the dirty stinking guts" (cf. 4.1.5) "Of shryke Owle hoarce" (cf. 1.5.38; 2.3.3). Jason says to her:

> Goe through the ample spaces wyde, infect the
>   poysoned Ayre,
> Beare witnesse, grace of god is none in place
>   of thy repayre,

(cf. 1.1.12; 4.1.138-9).[1] In Hercules Furens "the mournefull

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1. The Medea quotations are from Seneca His Tenne Tragedies, ed. T. Newton (originally published in 1581, reprinted by The Tudor Translations, ed. C. Whibley, London, 1927), Vol. II, pp. 55, 67, 84, 86, 98. See K. Muir, Shakespeare's Sources, p. 180, for Shakespeare's use of this translation of Seneca's works. Words used in Macbeth and not elsewhere by Shakespeare include "mounch", "fenny", and "Bellona". Each of these occurs in the three plays under discussion in Newton's Seneca, as do "fillet" and "hurly burly", only used once elsewhere by Shakespeare. It is noticeable that four of these five words belong with the witches.

Howlet cries" in hell (cf. 4.1.17, 19) and "serpentes licke" in "filthe full foule to see" (cf. 1.3.38). Hercules cries "fury to no man may heale and lose from gylty bandes My mynd defyeld" (cf. 3.1.64)[1]. It is noticeable that this imagery is shared between the Macbeths and the weird sisters. Both the Macbeths defile their minds with the wicked notions suggested by the witches, and this is reflected in the imagery the Macbeths and the witches have in common. In the same vein are Seneca's and Shakespeare's references to horrid animals, poison, plagues, and hellish tortures.

The light/darkness comparison is a regular theme in Seneca, but these plays yield examples of particular relevance to Macbeth. Medea, working up the charms for her murders, speaks of how "The darkned sonne, and glimmering stars at once hath shewed theyr light" (cf. 2.4.6-7) and the Chorus echoes with

Let groveling light with Dulceat nyght opprest
In cloking Cloudes wrapt up his muffled Face,

(cf. 3.3.46-7). Hercules asks the sun to "hyde thy syght... and face to heaven upholde, These monstrous sights to shun" (cf. 1.4.50-1), while in the Agamemnon

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1. Newton's Seneca, Vol. 1, pp. 31, 34. In future foot-
    notes, only page numbers will be given. These refer
    to Vol. 1 of Newton's Seneca in the case of Hercules
    Furens, and Vol. II in the cases of Medea and
    Agamemnon.

> The chrystall clearenesse of the day, and
>   Phoebus beames so bryght,
> Are myxed with the foggy cloudes, and dark-
>   nesse dim of nyght.

(cf. 1.1.12; 3.4.125-6; 3.5.35). Evil is associated with night, and good with day: when "Phoebus golden beames" shone afresh in the morning "The dolefull day discried all the domage done by nyght" (cf. 3.3.52-3). Night is personified as "Lady Night with mantel blacke" (cf. 1.5.50-1), and with this "mantell blacke of darknesse deepe cleane covered is the skyes" (cf. 1.5.53)[1].

A surprisingly regular pattern of imagery in Macbeth is concerned with ships on storm-lashed seas. This was one of Seneca's favourite themes. His Chorus frequently expresses the conflict in the hero's mind with a metaphor drawn from the oscillating turbulence experienced by a ship in a storm. Medea cries at the height of her tragic anguish:

> O false revolting mynde,
> Why dost thou staggring to and fro such chaunge
> of fancies fynde?...
> As when betweene the wrestling windes is raysed
> wrangling war, (cf. 1.3.15; 4.1.52)
> Echewhere the tumbling wallowing waves, are
> hoyst and reared hye...
> Even so my hart with strugling thoughts now
> sinks, now swells amaine. (cf. 4.3.210)

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1. References are to Medea, pp.88, 92; Agamemnon, pp. 102, 113, 123, 128; Hercules Furens, p. 28.

Medea herself has been banished: she is told "Thy Countrey
cleane hath cast thee of, to let thee sinke or swim" (cf.
1.2.8), and the kind of torture she charms up for her
husband involves not his death, but the agony of a tempest-
tossing:

> Preserve my Jasons life, but yet let him be
>   bayted out
> A myching, raging runnagate, in forren towns
>   about...
> God graunt in gulph of like distresse his
>   chyldren may be drownde,
> To sink in sorrowes stormes.   (cf. 1.3.24-5)

In the Agamemnon Clytemnestra's mind wrestles with itself:
"Thus am I driven to divers shores and beat from banke
to banke, And tossed in the fomy floods", and further
reference is made to human misery as "suffering shypwrack"
(cf. 1.2.26) where "A subtyle shallow floud there is flowne
on a stony sholde" (cf. 1.7.6). The Chorus in Hercules
Furens likens the hero's madness to a "greedy" storm in
which "His mynde with moving mad toste every waye" (cf.
4.2.20-2; 4.1.53-4). After having committed the chaotic
murders, Hercules calls on the aid of six great rivers,
but has to admit that their combined efforts could not "my
ryght hand now wash from gylt". He then adds:

> although Maeotis cold
> The waves of all the Northern sea on me shed out
>   now wolde,

> And al the water therof shoulde now pas by my
> two handes,
> Yet wil the mischiefe deepe remayne.
> (cf. 2.2.59-60)[1]

Along with the last passage I need quote only two more
instances from the many references to bloody hands in
Seneca. Hercules discovers his tragic deed when he lifts
up his hands in prayer and exclaims: "my hand fleeth
backe, some privy gylt their standes Whence comes this
bloud" (cf. 2.2.26-7; 2.2.58), and Medea asks "How oft in
haynous bloud have these my cruell handes bene dyed?"
(cf. 2.2.55-6; 5.1.42)[2].

Finally, Seneca's descriptions of disorder have
left marks on the imaginative language of Macbeth. Seneca
expresses notions of unnatural phenomena in three defined
areas of existence: within an individual, within a building,
and within the universe. The echoes from Seneca in Shakes-
peare are manifold, so I will select just one comparison

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1. It has been pointed out with respect to the last quotation
   that Shakespeare combined these lines with lines in the
   second act of Hippolytus, where the hero expresses the
   same notions with

   > not Neptune graundsire grave
   > With all his Ocean foulding floud can purge and
   > wash away
   > This dunghill foul of stain.

   The quotations are from Medea, pp. 56, 62, 95; Agamemnon,
   pp. 107, 123; Hercules Furens, pp. 31, 44, 51; Hippolytus,
   p. 162.
2. Medea, p. 61; Hercules Furens, p. 47.

from each of these areas. Preparing for the slaying of
her children, Medea demands of the powers of witchcraft:
"If ought of auncient corage still doe dwell within my
brest, Exile all foolysh Female feare, and pity" (cf.
1.5.40-3). At the killing of the king and her daughter
"flat on flowre the Pallace falles", while elsewhere there
is a "castle strongly buylt brought topsy turvye downe",
and "temples burne Even throwne upon [the inmates'] heads"
(cf. 4.1.56-8). At the universal level "A man would sure
have thought the worlde did from his center slyde, And
that the frames of Heaven broke up" (cf. 3.2.16)[1].

    These quotations from Seneca represent only a
fraction of the number of similar passages in the three
plays chosen for examination, not to mention similar
passages in the other seven Senecan tragedies. The
essential mood contained in these plays was picked up by
Shakespeare and transmitted through his use of imagery.
It is noticeable that the essential theme always concerns
evil, destruction, and chaos, in some form or another,
and this is, as many commentators have observed, the
feature of the Macbeth atmosphere.

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1. Medea, pp. 57, 93; Agamemnon, pp. 104, 120:
    Hercules Furens, p. 24.

Biblical Influence on the Imagery in "Macbeth"

The other major influence on the imaginative language in Macbeth was the Bible. Irving Ribner has traced parallels between the fall of Macbeth and the fall of Satan, much of his evidence being based on analogies drawn in the language of the play[1]. Macbeth's fall has also been found to parallel the fall of Adam. Herbert Coursen has noted several pertinent annotations to the Geneva Bible story of Adam and Eve, which suggests strongly that Shakespeare built into the language of the play parallels with the Genesis story designed to be picked up easily by his audience[2]. Paul Siegel has shown that Macbeth repeats the actions of Judas and Pilate by welcoming the Christ-like Duncan to his last supper, and then trying to wash his hands of the murder. Siegel also shows that Malcolm is a new-born Christ figure who triggers the envy in Macbeth's heart which causes his Lucifer-like downfall. All Siegel's evidence comes from Shakespeare's use of language which is addressed to recall of the Biblical accounts.[3]

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1. I. Ribner, "Macbeth: The Pattern of Idea and Action", Shakespeare Quarterly, Vol. 10, (1959), pp. 149-50.
2. H. Coursen, "In Deepest Consequence: Macbeth", Shakespeare Quarterly, Vol. 18, (1967), pp. 375-88.
3. P.N. Siegel, "Echoes of the Bible Story in Macbeth", Notes and Queries, Vol. 200, (1955), pp. 142-3.

However, Shakespeare's use of the Bible to help create the imaginative language in Macbeth did not stop short at occasional references to archetypal situations and patterns. He enriched the language of the whole play by drawing on areas of Bible language fertile in imagery and symbolism. In this way he gave added significance to his imagery patterns by making them relevant to the Biblical parallels evoked in the play as well as to the basic conflict between universal good and evil.

The death of Duncan is accompanied by the following descriptions: Lennox says "the earth Was feverous, and did shake" (2.3.61-2); Macduff reveals that "Most sacrilegious Murther hath broke ope The Lord's anointed Temple and stole thence the life o' th' building!" (2.3.68-70); and he then cries to the sleeping Malcolm and Banquo: "As from your graves rise up, and walk like sprites" (2.3.80). Speaking about the actual moment of the murder, Macbeth says "Methought, I heard a voice cry" (2.2.34). Compare these with the description of the Crucifixion in Matthew 27:50-3.

> Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud
> voice, yielded up the ghost. And, behold, the
> veil of the temple was rent in twain from the
> top to the bottom; and the earth did quake and
> the rocks rent; And the graves were opened: and

> *many bodies of the saints which slept arose,*
> *And came out of the graves...*[1]

There is no doubt that Shakespeare intended Duncan's death to parallel the Crucifixion. This had been prepared for where the valiant efforts of Banquo and Macbeth to save Scotland from destruction appear to the bleeding Captain as intending to "memorize another Golgotha" (1.2.41). At this point Banquo and Macbeth are the potential Saviours, the two bright "stars" (1.4.41) in the harmonious order, but "the brightest fell" (4.3.22) through selfish ambition, to become the "Devilish Macbeth" (4.3.117) who personally reenacts the killing of Christ and brings Hell-gate to within the realm of Scotland.[2]

Echoes from the death of Christ reverberate throughout the play. The references to the quaking of the earth and the trembling of the "single state of man" (1.3.140) link unnatural universal phenomena and men's fear with the attempted overpowering of Good by Evil inherent in the Crucifixion. Needless to say, the attempt

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1. On checking this and the following James I Bible quotations against the Geneva version (Printed by Christopher Barker, London, 1599), which Shakespeare could have used, no remarkable textual differences were found.
2. For a consideration of the knocking at the gate as a symbol of Christ's descent into hell to liberate the saints, see G. Wickham, "Hell-Castle and its Door-Keeper", Shakespeare Survey, Vol. 19, (1966), pp. 68-74.

by Chaos to destroy the Ordering Principle backfires
completely. "Stones have been known to move, and trees
to speak" (3.4.122), but this seemingly chaotic movement
of stones, rather than augmenting destruction, allows the
spirit of Good to "rise again" (3.4.79), while the trees'
speaking communicates the redefinition of the Garden of
Eden experience contained in the new message of the tree
on which Christ was hung. Macbeth had full knowledge of
the fact that he sentenced Good to death and embraced
Evil when he chopped Duncan down, but the line of Scottish
kings symbolised by the tree rooted in Banquo, was
indestructible, and Macbeth's end is signified by his
empty threat to the messenger who brings news of the
advance of Birnam wood:

>   If thou speak'st false,
> Upon the next tree shalt thou hang alive.
>   (5.5.39-40)

Another descriptive passage associated with the
Crucifixion comes from Luke 23:44-5:

> And it was about the sixth hour and there was
> a darkness over all the earth until the ninth
> hour. And the sun was darkened...

On the morning after Duncan's death Rosse and the Old Man
observe:

>   by th' clock 'tis day,
> And yet dark night strangles the travelling lamp
> ...darkness does the face of earth entomb,
> When living light should kiss it.
>   (2.4.6-7, 9-10)

The darkness surrounding the Crucifixion symbolised the
stifling of the unique being who was "the light of the
world" (John 8:12), who contained the essential goodness
given by God to the world when it was first created: "God
saw the light, that it was good" (Genesis 1:4). Nearly
all the scenes in Macbeth take place in gloom. The murky
influence of the witches upon the atmosphere, the gloomy
interior of the Macbeths' hellish castle, the night
murder scenes, the unnatural darkness following Duncan's
death, these are only alleviated by the briefly pleasant
freshness of Banquo and Duncan perceiving "The temple-
haunting martlet" (1.6.4) and the scene between Malcolm
and Macduff in the realm of England over which the miracle-
performing Edward holds sway. The restoration of the
"Good things of Day", which gave place to "Night's black
agents" (3.3.52-3) during Macbeth's reign, is long over-
due when Malcolm ends the scene in England by questioning
the right of unnatural death and darkness to have ruled for
so long in Scotland: "The night is long that never finds
the day" (4.3.240)[1].

Another aspect of the play's imaginative
language that Shakespeare enriched by giving it Biblical
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1. R.M. Frye, in "'Out, out, brief candle' and the Jacobean
    Understanding", Notes and Queries, Vol. 200, (1955), pp.
    143-5, shows that Macbeth's speech at 5.5.17-28 was
    enriched by the audience's knowledge of Biblical details
    relating to the candle and the shadow.

relevance is the animal imagery. With two exceptions, all

the animals referred to in Macbeth were in Biblical terms

unclean[1]. The Old Testament considered them unfit for

eating and unfit for sacrifice; they were supposed to carry

diseases and be possessed by evil spirits. The Jacobeans

relegated them to the lower orders of animals in the

chain of being, because the harm they did to man far out-

weighed the good. The exceptions to this rule in the play

are the lamb and the deer, mentioned in relation to Malcolm

(4.3.16, 54) and Macduff's innocent family (4.3.206)[2]. This

description of Malcolm gains further significance from

being a common Biblical title for Christ.

A considerable number of the animals associated

with the witches and the evil deeds of the Macbeths were

singled out in the Bible. The serpent (1.5.65) was the

archetypal symbol of evil (Genesis 3:1); swine (1.3.2)

were a symbol of utter degradation (Matthew 7:6); dogs

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1. See R. Pinney, The Animals in the Bible, (N.Y. 1964),
   pp. 20-5, for a listing of the clean and unclean animals
   and their particular significances.
2. The Old Testament considered goats (4.1.27) clean since
   they had cloven hoofs and chewed the cud, but the goat
   was a symbol of lechery derived from the Dionysian
   tradition, and this ensured it a place amongst the foul
   and damned animals in Jacobean thinking.

(3.1.49) were an "abomination unto the Lord" (Deuteronomy
23:18); the lion (1.2.35) typified the Devil seeking to
devour the unwary (1 Peter 5:8); scorpions (3.2.36) were
the promised tormenters of those men who did not have "the
seal of God in their foreheads" (Revelation 9:3-5)[1]; the
bear (3.4.99; 5.7.2) and the lion were the two most
dangerous animals, their viciousness belonging proverbially
to the "wicked ruler over the poor people" (Proverbs
28:15); the wolf (2.1.53) was the symbol of a treacherous
enemy (Matthew 7:15) who worked in the gloom of evening
(Jeremiah 5:6; Habakkuk 1:8) "to get dishonest gain"
(Ezekiel 22:27). The description of "the day of the Lord's
vengeance" (Isaiah 34:8-15) shows the owl (2.2.3), the
raven (1.5.38), and the dragon (4.1.21), thriving in the
confusion and bloodshed, while the plagues with which
Egypt was cursed for keeping the Hebrews in bondage included
inundations of frogs (4.1.14), lice (1.2.11-12), and flies
(4.2.32)[2].

By using animal imagery which was imbued with
symbolic values from the Bible, Shakespeare strengthened

1. For a discussion of this see D. Biggins, "Scorpions,
   Serpents and Treachery in Macbeth" in Shakespeare
   Studies, Vol. 1 (1965), pp. 29-36.
2. See Exodus 8:2, 17, 21. It is interesting to note that
   the other plagues included the waters of the river
   turning to blood (Exodus 7:20) (cf. 3.4.136), and the
   covering of the land with darkness (Exodus 10:21)
   (cf. 2.4.6-10).

the theme of evil as a living force in the play, and
capitalised on the fear responses that the Church had
built into the Jacobean mind. We must remember that in
an age where the lack of public literacy still kept alive
the verbal tradition of literature, and where the Church
played a large part in all facets of life, the general
audience in the theatre would have been far more sensitive
to Biblical echoes and significances than it is today.
The Jacobean audience could not have failed to have felt
that in Macbeth all nature seemed to be damned. Nearly
all the animals in the play's imagery were those which
fell to the most degraded levels when man fell, and which
represented the ugliness and viciousness that God could
not look upon. Shakespeare's audience would have seen in
the play's atmosphere a reflection of Macbeth's own fall
into foulness and savagery. To them, he would have been
a chaotic devil, a plague upon his fellows, a man perverted
by ambition beyond all hope of salvation.

The imagery of Macbeth is drawn from a variety
of sources, both literary and graphic. The modes of
influence of these sources vary too: the very specific
borrowings from Holinshed and the royal lineage woodcuts
may be contrasted with the atmospheric and theme-
strengthening effects derived from Seneca and the Bible.
There remains to be discussed yet another major source
for imagery in Macbeth. At the time of writing this play

Shakespeare was not only aware of the imagery used by other writers, he was also strongly influenced by his own previous work.

The Imagery of "Macbeth", or "Hamlet" Revisited

In her article "The Sources of Macbeth",[1] Muriel C. Bradbrook identifies three major source areas which influenced Shakespeare's writing of Macbeth. These are first, the works of Holinshed, second, material on witch-craft and demonology, and third, Shakespeare's earlier works. With reference to the third area, Miss Bradbrook points to several lines in 2 Henry IV and the Rape of Lucrece which have parallels in Macbeth. She also observes the atmospheric similarities between these last two works, and shows that the emotional components of Tarquin's character could very likely have influenced Shakespeare's conception of Macbeth. Miss Bradbrook notes that the process by which Macbeth was written was a "welding" of sources where "a wide diversity of material was fused into unity. 'In the quick forge and working-house of thought', Shakespeare wrought at white heat".[2]

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1. In Shakespeare Survey, No. 4, (1951), pp. 35-48.
2. Ibid., p. 35. See also K. Muir, Appendix D, Macbeth, Arden edition, (1967).

Miss Bradbrook was not the first to suggest that Shakespeare's earlier work influenced the writing of Macbeth. A number of years earlier, J.M. Nosworthy suggested the Player's Hecuba speech in Hamlet as a source for the "bleeding Captain" scene in Macbeth[1]. At the time Nosworthy's article was written, Shakespeare's authorship of this scene had been questioned. On the basis of fairly solid evidence, Nosworthy suggested that "echoes of the Hamlet passage were running through the mind of Shakespeare, or the alleged collaborator, when he penned the 'bleeding captain' scene."[2] Nosworthy went on to suggest that this scene was indeed Shakespeare's own. L.C. Knights and Kenneth Muir have supported by other means Shakespeare's authorship of the scene, thus bearing out Nosworthy's suggestion. An incidental effect of what I have to say in the following pages will be to vindicate the method by which J.M. Nosworthy arrived at this conclusion.

Not only in the "bleeding Captain" scene, but throughout the writing of Macbeth, echoes from Hamlet were running through Shakespeare's mind. The earlier play

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1. J.M. Nosworthy, "The Bleeding Captain Scene in Macbeth" in Review of English Studies, Vol. 22, (1946), pp. 126-30.
2. Ibid., p. 129.

had been written some five years beforehand, and the reason why it should have been recalled to Shakespeare's mind is simple. The two plays have basically the same story. Each concerns a usurper who murders the king and takes the crown, after which the son of the assassinated king plots and brings about the death of the usurper. In basic plot structure, both plays parallel the Orestes myth.

The difference between the two plays lies in the focus taken by each. In Hamlet the main character is not the usurper, but the son of the murdered king. In Macbeth we are concerned mainly with the psychological drama of the usurper, not that of the murdered king's son. The plays take up the story at different points. Because the first play is concerned more with the revenge of the murdered king's son, it starts later, after the assassination. On the other hand, Macbeth begins with the true king still alive. Both plays finish soon after the death of the usurper. Thus more of the events in the basic story appear on stage in the Macbeth version, while in the other play time is used to accommodate the delays in the son's revenge plan. Macbeth has scenes concerning war, and Hamlet scenes concerning rumours of war. Both plays have a strong supernatural element, with appearances of ghosts on stage. Both plays take much of their action and atmos-phere from Senecan influence. Both plays involve the deaths

of innocents, and both focus on the guilt of the usurper's wife. Both plays stress the virtuous natures of the king and his son.

Returning to J.M. Nosworthy's article, it is noticeable that a number of the parallels listed there occur in the imagery of the two scenes. First there is the commonplace description of Fortune: "Fortune... Show'd like a rebel's whore" (Mac 1.2.14-5) and "thou strumpet Fortune!" (Ham 2.2.481)[1]. Then there is the classical war imagery - less commonplace than the previous parallel. In Macbeth, Norway, assisted by the Thane of Cawdor,

> began a dismal conflict;
> Till that Bellona's bridegroom, lapp'd in proof,
> Confronted him... (Mac 1.2.54-8)

In Hamlet Pyrrhus appears, like the "bloody man" (Mac 1.2.1.) "o'ersized with coagulate gore" (Ham 2.2.450) which is described as "heraldry more dismal" (Ham 2.2.444). He sets about Priam with "less remorse" than the Cyclops' hammers falling "On Mars's armour, forg'd for proof enterne" (Ham 2.2.477-9). The third parallel lies in the use of the lull-before-the-storm figure in both scenes where Pyrrhus is about to set "him new awork" and where Norway is about

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1. This and all future references to Hamlet are taken from the Kittredge Shakespeares edition of Hamlet, ed. G.L. Kittredge, revised by I. Ribner, (Mass. 1967).

to begin "a fresh assault":

> But, as we often see, against some storm,
> A silence in the heavens, the rack stand still,
> The bold winds speechless, and the orb below
> As hush as death - anon the dreadful thunder
> Doth rend the region...   (Ham 2.2.471-5)
>
> As whence the sun 'gins his reflection,
> Shipwracking storms and direful thunders break,
> So from that spring, whence comfort seem'd to come,
> Discomfort swells.   (Mac 1.2.25-8)

Together with numerous other parallels, Nosworthy used

these parallels in imagery to make a case for the influence

of the 'Hecuba scene' on the 'bleeding captain' scene.

This is my starting point for a wider ranging claim that

the very numerous parallels seen in the imagery throughout

Macbeth and Hamlet suggest that Shakespeare recalled the

ways in which he had illustrated incidents and emotions

in the earlier play and adapted these for his purposes in

the later play. On several occasions Shakespeare's

'adaptation' can hardly be given that name. His use of

imagery in Macbeth often indicates direct borrowing from

Hamlet.

In most cases the imagery parallels are so strik-

ingly obvious they need no added comment. It will be

noticed that they are more than simple verbal echoes. In

most cases they are integrally involved with the overall

similarities of incident and character contexts in the

two plays.

The supernatural elements give rise to a number of parallels. It is recognised in both plays that the supernatural beings are made of "air" (Ham 1.1.145; Mac 1.3.81). The dialogue runs in Hamlet: "Question it, Horatio - What art thou...?" (Ham F1, Q1:1.1.45-6), while Banquo asks "are you ought That man may question?" (Mac 1.3.42-3). "Speak, speak! I charge thee speak!" (Ham 1.1.51) cries Horatio to the ghost, and with "Speak, I charge you" (Mac 1.3.78) Macbeth challenges the witches.

Associated with the appearances of ghosts in both plays is a significantly similar group of images. The general concept of a ghost rising and notions of supernatural revelation of the murderer contribute to this group of images:

                    Foul deeds will rise
Though all the earth o'erwhelm them, to men's
 eyes...   (Ham 1.2.257-8)
...murder, though it have no tongue, will speak
With most miraculous organ. (Ham 2.2.579-80)
            Look you how, pale he glares!
His form and cause conjoin'd, preaching to stones,
Would make them capable.   (Ham 3.4.125-7)

                    ...our graves must send
Those that we bury, back...
... they rise again...   (Mac 3.4.70-1,79)

...quit my sight! let the earth hide thee!
Thy bones are marrowless, thy blood is cold;
Thou hast no speculation in those eyes,
Which thou dost glare with. (Mac 3.4.92-5)

> It will have blood, they say: blood will have
>   blood:
> <u>Stones have been known to move</u>, and trees to <u>speak</u>;
> Augures, and understood relations, have
> By magot-pies, and choughs, and rooks, brought
>   forth
> The secret'st man of blood.   (<u>Mac</u> 3.4.121-5)

The details of the murder in Hamlet are given by

the ghost (1.5.62-3) and re-enacted by the players (3.2.49).

The pouring of poison into the ear reappears in Lady

Macbeth's fatal wooing of her husband's intentions:

> Hie thee hither,
> That I may pour my spirits in thine ear.
>   (<u>Mac</u> 1.5.25-6)

The <u>Hamlet</u> ghost's description of the murder is echoed

in Lady Macbeth's murderous thoughts and actions:

> ...with a sudden vigour it [the poison] doth
>   posset
> And curd, like eager droppings into <u>milk</u>,
> The <u>thin</u> and wholesome <u>blood</u>. (Ham 1.5.68-70)

> ...Make <u>thick</u> my <u>blood</u>...
> And take my <u>milk</u> for gall...   (<u>Mac</u> 1.5.43, 48)

> I have drugged their <u>possets</u>,
> That death and Nature do contend about them,
> Whether they live, or die.   (<u>Mac</u> 2.2.6-8)

Malcolm's plan to kill Macbeth is expressed in the same

terms as Claudius' plan to kill Hamlet:

> an exploit now ripe in my device,
> Under the which he shall not choose but fall;
> And for his death no wind of blame shall breathe.
>   (<u>Ham</u> 4.7.64-6)

> Macbeth is ripe for shaking.   (<u>Mac</u> 4.3.238)

Hamlet describes the re-enactment of the murder by the
players as "a knavish piece of work" (<u>Ham</u> 3.2.230).
Banquo calls Duncan's murder a "most bloody piece of
work" (<u>Mac</u> 2.4.128).

At 3.1.152, Ophelia says Hamlet was the "rose
of the fair state" Denmark, which Hamlet himself described
as "an unweeded garden" (<u>Ham</u> 1.2.135). Referring to the
strange events following the death of the king, Horatio
mentions "dews of blood" (<u>Ham</u> 1.1.117). These figurative
elements have come together in Lenox's speech before the
attack on King Macbeth by the rightful heir to the throne.
Lenox says Malcolm's supporters will spill as much blood
as it takes "To dew the sovereign flower, and drown the
weeds" (<u>Mac</u> 5.3.30). The delay in Hamlet's revenge pro-
vides imagery for Malcolm's wish to overcome delay. The
ghost chides Hamlet:

> This visitation
> Is but to whet thy almost blunted purpose.
> (<u>Ham</u> 3.4.110-1)

Malcolm challenges Macduff to sharpen his resolution on
the loss of his loved ones:

> Be this the whetstone of your sword:
> ...blunt not the heart, enrage it.
> (<u>Mac</u> 4.3.228-9)

In monologue Hamlet considers his motives:

> all occasions do inform against me
> And spur my dull revenge! (<u>Ham</u> 4.4.32-3)

Also in monologue, Macbeth has the same image, but he
uses it to illustrate his lack of a revenge motive for
killing Duncan:

> I have no spur
> To prick the sides of my intent. (Mac 1.7.25-6)

One of the instances of Hamlet's hesitance is during the
'prayer scene' where he intends to kill Claudius, but
stops to think about the consequences, uttering the words
"That would be scann'd" (Ham 3.3.75). Macbeth illustrates
his decision to hesitate no more with these words:

> Strange things I have in head, that will to hand,
> Which must be acted, ere they may be scann'd.
> (Mac 3.4.138-9)

The old grave-digger provides Hamlet with an example of
the effects of 'custom'.

> Ham. Has this fellow no feeling of his business,
>   that a' sings at grave-making?
> Hor. Custom hath made it in him a property of
>   easiness.
> Ham. 'Tis e'en so. The hand of little employ-
>   ment hath the daintier sense. (Ham 5.1.62-6)

This notion of age and custom combining to facilitate the
undertaking of unpleasant business is repeated in Macbeth's
words:

> My strange and self abuse
> Is the initiate fear, that wants hard use:
> We are yet but young in deed.   (Mac 3.4.141-3)

H. Granville-Barker has said:

> We have in Claudius the makings of the central
> figure of a tragedy. Something of him will be
> found very highly developed in Macbeth. There
> again is the man who does murder for his crown,
> cannot repent and is drawn further into ill.[1]

Granville-Barker compares Claudius' "That we would do, We should do when we would..." (Ham 4.7.118-9) with Macbeth's "If it were done, when 'tis done, then 'twere well It were done quickly..." (Mac 1.7.1-2). There are many parallels in the imagery associated with the two characters which bear out Granville-Barker's point. In particular, the imagery in the 'prayer scene' of Hamlet seems to have been prominent in Shakespeare's mind during the writing of Macbeth. Claudius says:

> 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? (Ham 3.3.43-6)

The same grand proportions are echoed in Macbeth's

> Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood
> Clean from my hand? (Mac 2.2.59-60)

Claudius attempts to pray, hoping that his heart will be "soft as sinews of the new-born babe!" (Ham 3.3.71). Macbeth has a vision of "Pity, like a naked new-born babe" (Mac 1.7.21). (Shakespeare nowhere else uses the words "new-born babe"). Macbeth's vision of Pity also includes

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1. H. Granville-Barker, Prefaces to Shakespeare, Vol. 1, (London, 1958), p. 216.

"heaven's Cherubins" (Mac 1.7.22) and Hamlet had referred

to one of these ("I see a cherub" - Ham 4.3.47) in

dialogue with Claudius who, like Macbeth when he alludes

to the "Cherubins", is about to effect a murder.

Both Claudius and Macbeth are painted in the

same colours ("O bosom black as death" - Ham 3.3.67; and

"black Macbeth" - Mac 4.3.52) and both find that their

attempts at devotion are in vain: "Pray can I not"

cries Claudius (Ham 3.3.38); "I could not say, 'Amen',

When they did say, 'God bless us'" moans the distracted

Macbeth (Mac 2.2.28-9).

In the 'prayer scene' Claudius observes that

> 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...   (Ham 3.3.57-60)

Commentators have seen the "gilded hand" as the money-

laden hand of the offender. But a comparison with lines

in Macbeth shows that Shakespeare probably had another

idea in mind as well. Macbeth speaks of Duncan's "silver

skin lac'd with his golden blood" (Mac 2.3.112) and Lady

Macbeth says of the king's murder:

> If he do bleed,
> I'll gild the faces of the grooms withal,
> For it must seem their guilt. (Mac 2.2.54-6)

The notions underlying the concept of a king's blood being

golden have been investigated by W.A. Murray[1]. It is
reasonable to suppose that this thought had been in
Shakespeare's mind when he wrote Claudius's lines in the
'prayer scene'. The blood on the "cursed hand" (Ham
3.3.43) is the blood of a king. "Offence's gilded hand"
is the hand of a regicide. Claudius has won the crown
by the murder, and the workings of human justice are
subordinate to the power of this crown - "the wicked prize
itself Buys out the law" (Ham 3.3.58-9).

The wives of the two murderers are also treated
alike. Shakespeare illustrated Lady Macbeth's guilt with
the same image he used for Gertrude's guilt:

> Thou turn'st mine eyes into my very soul,
> And there I see such black and grained spots
> As will not leave their tinct. (Ham 3.4.89-91)

> Yet here's a spot... Out, damned spot!
> (Mac 5.1.30, 34)

The falls of Claudius and Macbeth are similar
in that their destructions come about largely as a result
of their own machinations intended to destroy potential
enemies. In Hamlet reference was made to "purposes mistook,
Fall'n on th' inventors' heads" (Ham 5.2.370-1), and
Macbeth talks of castles that "topple on their warders'

1. W.A. Murray, "Why Was Duncan's Blood Golden?", in
    Shakespeare Survey, No. 19, (1966), pp. 34-44.

heads" (Mac 4.1.56). Bloody projects which backfire on the perpetrators are illustrated in both plays with the image of the "inventor" unwittingly preparing his own destruction. The word "inventor" is used nowhere else by Shakespeare.

                              So shall you hear
          Of carnal, bloody, and unnatural acts;
          Of accidental judgments, casual slaughters;
          Of deaths put on by cunning and forc'd cause;
          And in this upshot, purposes mistook
          Fall'n on th' inventors heads. (Ham 5.2.366-71)

Horatio could just as easily be speaking about the later play, where Macbeth describes how

                            we but teach
          Blood instructions, which, being taught, return
          To plague th' inventor.   (Mac 1.7.8-10)

The plights of the states of Denmark and Scotland are similar. In Hamlet the state was seen "to be disjoint and out of frame" (Ham 1.2.20). Macbeth wishes this upon Scotland: "let the frame of things disjoint" (Mac 3.2.16). Both states are the subjects of elaborate patterns of descriptive imagery which illustrate their plights in terms of sickness. The sickness of Denmark is an unseen deadly infection undermining the health of the nation from within. The remedy involves cutting out the poisoning source. Scotland's sickness is a raging fever burning away the good substance of the state and shaking the life out of the nation. The physic needed here is a bloodletting.

Both Hamlet and Malcolm are seen as physicians. "I'll
tent him to the quick," says Hamlet (Ham 2.2.583); "Let's
make us med'cines of our great revenge, To cure this
deadly grief," says Malcolm (Mac 4.3.214-5).

There are noticeable similarities in the bird
imagery of the two plays. "The croaking raven doth bellow
for revenge" in Hamlet (Ham 3.2.241-2), and the bird re-
appears in Macbeth:

> The raven himself is hoarse,
> That croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan.
> (Mac 1.5.38-9)

Both birds bellow about the killing of a king. Fearful
prophesies are illustrated with bird imagery elsewhere in
both plays:

> There's something in his soul
> O'er which his melancholy sits on brood;
> And I doubt the hatch and the disclose
> Will be some danger. (Ham 3.1.164-7)

> ...prophesying with accents terrible
> Of dire combustion, and confus'd events,
> New-hatch'd to th' woeful time, the obscure bird
> Clamour'd ... (Mac 2.3.58-61)

"New-hatch'd" is also used at 1.3.65 in Hamlet to describe
novel events in the world. These constitute Shakespeare's
only uses of the term.

There remain to be quoted a number of miscellane-
ous parallels in the imagery of Hamlet and Macbeth. Blood
and heraldry combine in images in both plays. Pyrrhus is
described in this way:

> this dread and black complexion smear'd
> With heraldry more dismal.
>   ...horridly trick'd
> With blood...   (Ham 2.2.443-6)

This is echoed in the 'heraldry' of guilt worn by the innocent grooms in Macbeth: "Their hands and faces were all badg'd with blood" (Mac 2.3.102). The Porter's "primrose way to th' everlasting bonfire" (Mac 2.3.20-1) is reminiscent of Ophelia's "primrose path of dalliance" (Ham 1.3.51). Finally, Hamlet's words "break my heart, for I must hold my tongue!" (Ham 1.2.159) find a parallel in Malcolm's advice to the distraught Macduff:

> Give sorrow words; the grief, that does not speak,
> Whispers the o'er-fraught heart, and bids it
>   break.   (Mac 4.3.209-10)

    Mention of this last parallel brings us to a general similarity in the imagery of Hamlet and Macbeth. The breaking heart and the silent tongue derive from an old Senecan tag. Similarly the parallel concerning the unwashable blood-thick hand (quoted above) derives from Seneca. These examples are considered by F.R. Johnson in his "Shakesperian Imagery and Senecan Imitation"[1] where he

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1.   In Adams Memorial Studies, ed. McManaway, Dawson and Willoughby, (Washington, 1948), pp. 43-50. For a further examination of Hamlet - Seneca links see E.M. Spearing's Introduction to Studley's translation of Seneca's Agamemnon and Medea, (Louvain, 1913; reprinted Vaduz 1963), Section V.

comments on the general influence of Senecan notions on Shakespeare's imagery. There are several other examples of imagery common to <u>Hamlet</u> and <u>Macbeth</u> which owe debts to Seneca. These include the notional images of the cruelly intended plots falling on the inventors' heads and the universal frame being out of joint. There is also a general Senecan similarity in the atmospheric imagery used in both plays.

> 'Tis now the very <u>witching time of night</u>,
> When <u>churchyards yawn</u>, and <u>hell itself breathes out</u>
> <u>Contagion</u> to the world. Now could I drink <u>hot blood</u>
> And do such bitter business as <u>the day</u>
> <u>Would quake to look on</u>.   (<u>Ham</u> 3.2.370-4)

This speech by Hamlet, while having no direct parallel in <u>Macbeth</u>, combines a number of Senecan elements found also in the horrific atmosphere of the later play. (See <u>Macbeth</u> 4.1.48; 3.4.70-2; 4.1.138-9; 3.4.135-7; 3.2.46-7).

Shakespeare must have felt that the imagery in <u>Hamlet</u> had successfully served its purpose. In the writing of <u>Macbeth</u>, his imagination logically and readily drew on the language used in the earlier play. A number of the images in <u>Macbeth</u> represent a re-evaluation of the imagery used in <u>Hamlet</u>. In general the borrowings demonstrate Shakespeare's propensity towards utilising those sources which were close at hand and in which he recognised the germ of success - even if it was to be success a second

time over. We certainly do not leave the theatre after
a performance of <u>Macbeth</u> thinking that it was just a
rehash of the old success, and that we have been cheated
of our money. On the contrary, it is with surprise that
one notices the many parallels in the imagery and
structure of the two plays. Once again Shakespeare's
creative talent has turned old lines into new by that
admirable process in "the quick forge and working-house
of thought".

CHAPTER THREE

HAMLET

More has been written on <u>Hamlet</u> than on any other play. Yet, within this large body of critical work there is a disproportionately small number of imagery studies. In contrast the imagery of <u>King Lear</u> and <u>Othello</u> has been studied in great detail, this study resulting in the publication of a number of full-length monographs.[1]

Although the critical attention to imagery in <u>Hamlet</u> has not been sustained in any detailed account, what has been done provides the reader with accurate and penetrating guidelines. If the critical endeavour on the subject of imagery in <u>Hamlet</u> is considered as a large canvas, then it can be said that the basic outlines have all been drawn in truthfully, but the wealth of detail still remains to be added to many areas[2].

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1. I.e. R.B. Heilman, <u>Magic in the Web: Action and Language in "Othello"</u>, (Kentucky, 1956) and <u>This Great Stage: Image and Structure in "King Lear"</u>, (Washington, 1963); R.A. Fraser, <u>Shakespeare's Poetics: In Relation to "King Lear"</u> (London, 1962).

2. Those who have studied the imagery of <u>Hamlet</u> include W.H. Clemen, <u>The Development of Shakespeare's Imagery</u>, (London, 1951), pp. 106-18; C. Spurgeon, <u>Shakespeare's Imagery and What it Tells Us</u> (Cambridge, 1935), pp. 316-20; U. Ellis-Fermor, <u>The Frontiers of Drama</u>, (London, 1945), pp. 88-93; M.M. Morozov, "The Individualisation of Shakespeare's Characters through Imagery", in <u>Shakespeare Survey</u>, No. 2, (1949), pp. 93-106; M. Mack, "The World of <u>Hamlet</u>" in <u>The Yale Review</u>, Vol. 41, (1952), pp. 502-23; L.C. Knights "Prince Hamlet" in <u>Explorations</u>, (Middlesex, 1964), pp. 76-87; K. Muir, "Imagery and Symbol in <u>Hamlet</u>", in <u>Etudes Anglaises</u>, Vol. 17, (1964), pp. 325-63; and S.A. Weiss, "'Solid', 'Sullied' and Mutability: A Study in Imagery" in <u>Shakespeare Quarterly</u>, Vol. 10, (1959), pp. 219-27.

Unlike the other three plays studied in this thesis _Hamlet_ cannot be directly compared with its major source. The often-discussed _Ur-Hamlet_ (probably written by Kyd) is not extant. I had hoped (for reasons given later) that a comparison of _Hamlet_'s imagery with the imagery in Kyd's _Spanish Tragedy_ and in Belleforest's Hamlet story might reveal something about the nature of the imagery in the _Ur-Hamlet_, but this approach has met with little success.

Nevertheless, the imagery in _Hamlet_ has proved to be valuable in another respect, for it readily reveals how Shakespeare's poetic language was strongly influenced by non-literary sources - notions, concepts, and phenomena common in the world around the poet.

The Use of Everyday Life and Beliefs in the Imaginative Language of "Hamlet":   Examples of Non-Literary Sources for Imagery

In discussing sources for _Hamlet_'s imagery I intend to examine some unexplored areas which may contribute to a fuller understanding of the play. I will examine three types of imagery. First to be discussed is the use throughout the play of a particular pattern of imagery to illustrate three central themes. In this case, the image pattern concerns plants, these being associated with memory, dissembling and guilt. Second I will examine closely a passage in the text of the play and show how its

fullest meaning depends on imagery found elsewhere in the play. The passage is found at 1.5.63-9. It is the ghost's description of how he was killed. This description is significantly associated with that group of ideas running through the play which concerns the Elizabethan concept of the body politic. Finally, I wish to show that a large number of references in the imaginative language of Hamlet may be drawn together into one category headed: "the worker". Shakespeare seems to have wished to emphasise Prince Hamlet's affinities with the common man and the lower classes, and to help him achieve this, Shakespeare, in the play's imagery, regularly alludes to the trades and domestic occupations of the simple town-folk.

The style of life and the ideas prevailing in Shakespeare's age are important areas of examination for a source critic. The three points to be discussed here are examples from the wide range of non-literary sources which greatly influenced Shakespeare's imagery. Plant lore, and socio-political concepts like the body politic, are typical of the multitude of ideas, held dear in the 16th and early 17th centuries, which were derived from the structure of the natural and social worlds as it was conceived through what we now call the Elizabethan world picture. This poetic outlook on the universe had a pro-found effect not only on the imaginative language of

Shakespeare, but also in a similar way on the work of his contemporaries.

Correspondences, associations of essence and form, substitution based on linking patterns - these make up the basic stuff of metaphor and simile. But in Shakespeare's age they underlay all the laws of science and religion built around the Ptolemaic universal system. The richness of the imagery employed by Shakespeare and his fellow writers owes no small debt to the contemporary science and theology which were based on associative principles.

The Copernican system - which was still commonly regarded as a theory during Shakespeare's life - was not to gain popular support until after the writings of Francis Bacon. The special significances and powers given to various different plants or animals or planets were widely recognised and accepted by all - scientists, theologians, courtiers, and the common people. These significances provided writers in Shakespeare's time with a rich fund of meaningful allusions, most of which, while certain to be lost on a modern reader who lacks the aid of scholarship, would have been picked up easily by the Elizabethan and early Jacobean audiences.

Co-existing with the world of ideas for an individual living in this period was the everyday world of

English town or country life. Caroline Spurgeon has given
a detailed account of the influence of various life styles
and everyday experiences on Shakespeare's imagery. In her
book Shakespeare's Imagery and What it Tells Us[1] she has
shown how a reader's knowledge of life in Shakespeare's
time can illuminate much of his imagery. Sports like
bowls and falconing; occupations like those of the cooper
and the courtier; travel by horse and sail; entertainment
in theatre and pageant; scientific theory and medical
practice; many aspects of the contemporary culture influenc-
ed the nature and qualities of Shakespeare's imaginative
language. Walter Whiter's comment, made in 1794, is
relevant here:

> In the fictions, the thoughts, and the language
> of the poet, you may ever mark the deep and
> unequivocal traces of the age in which he lived,
> of the employments in which he was engaged, and
> of the various objects which excited his passions
> or arrested his attention.[2]

Thus the life and ideas of Shakespeare's time
constitute a source area for imagery in all his plays.
The three points discussed here, taken from the imagery of
Hamlet, are examples of a mode of influence different from
the influence of the imagery in a literary source, but
equally effective in the shaping of Shakespeare's imaginat-
ive language.

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1. op. cit., especially Part 1.
2. W. Whiter, A Specimen of a Commentary on Shakespeare
    (1794), (Yorkshire, 1972), p. 73.

i. Imagery Influenced by Plant-Lore: Thoughts, Deceit and Guilt Illustrated

The flowers Ophelia distributes to members of the court in Act 4, scene 5 derive symbolic significance from the "language of flowers" as it was understood in Shakespeare's day[1]. With the help of these significances scholars have been able to work out which characters received the various types of flowers from Ophelia. The rosemary and pansies, symbols of memory and thoughts, are given to Laertes. The fennel and columbines, symbolising deceit and thanklessness, are given to the king. Then the queen receives rue, symbol of the bitterness of guilt and the need for repentance, while Ophelia herself keeps a sprig of this sorrowful flower, emphasising that the queen must wear hers "with a difference" (4.5.178-9)[2].

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1. Explanations of the Elizabethan "language of flowers" are found in Clement Robinson's A Handfull of Pleasant Delites (1584) and in common dictionaries of Shakespeare's day. These are quoted in the New Variorium Edition of Hamlet, ed. H.H. Furness. See also A.S. Hilliard's work "Shakespeare's Botanical Imagery: Its Meaning to the Elizabethan Audience and Its Dramatic Function in the Plays", (Dissertation in the University of Tennessee, 1964; DA microfilm No. 65-1435).
2. All references to Hamlet from the Kittredge Shakespeares edition, ed. G.L. Kittredge, revised by I. Ribner. (Massachusetts, 1967).

For whom the daisy and the violets were meant is obscure.
The daisy sometimes represented dissembling and deceit,
and this has led to the suggestion that it is given to
the king. Elsewhere the daisy imported pure virginity or
spring of life[1], and this has suggested to some scholars
that it is kept by Ophelia, or handed to Horatio along
with the apology for having no violets, symbols of faithful-
ness.

In spite of the obscurities in this passage,
three points are clearly made. First, the handing of
rosemary and pansies to Laertes directs his memory and
thoughts – the things the flowers symbolize – to two events:
his father's murder and his sister's madness (see 4.5.174-5:
"a document in madness"; and 4.5.208-11: "His means of death,
his obscure funeral, etc"). Both these thoughts spur him
on towards his revenge. Second, the plants symbolising
deceit and dissembling aptly underscore the behaviour of
the king. Ophelia has seen in the king's reaction to the
play and his organisation of her father's hasty funeral
that he is covering up something of importance. Her mad-
ness prevents her being afraid to make her suspicions
public in the flower-distributing ritual. Third, in giving

1. See H.H. Furness (ed.) Hamlet, Note to 4.7.171 (p. 371
   in Vol. 1).

rue to the queen, Ophelia wants to direct Gertrude's attention towards her quick remarriage and the fact that her son killed Ophelia's father. Ophelia may even suspect the queen of further guilt through a possible collaboration with Claudius in the evil deed he is hiding. Gertrude needs to repent if she is to uphold the purity of her sex as Ophelia does. Also, in repenting, she will feel the bitter sorrow of the loss of her true love, like the sorrow Ophelia feels at this point. Thus thoughts, deceit and guilt are the three major themes evoked by the "flower language" of this scene. It is of importance to note that the plant imagery throughout the play illustrates these three themes.

Laertes as revenger is foil for Hamlet as revenger. "Thoughts and remembrance" of his father's murder, prompted by Ophelia's flowers, set him to action. He leaves Act 4, scene 5 a man determined to find out the facts and wreak vengeance on the offender. In contrast Hamlet's thoughts, far from spurring him on, sickly o'er his "native hue of resolution" (3.1.84). Throughout the first four acts of the play Hamlet's memory constantly presents him with thoughts on his father's murder - yet he delays. The imaginative language in which these reminders are expressed is notably related to plants. The ghost attempts to prompt Hamlet to revenge by saying:

> ...duller shouldst thou be than the fat weed
> That rots itself in ease on Lethe wharf,
> Wouldst thou not stir in this.   (1.5.32-4)

Hamlet becomes identified with the "fat weed" when he
fails to "stir". His inaction is nourished on forgetful-
ness. The Player King says:

> Purpose is but the slave to memory,
> Of violent birth but poor validity;
> Which now, the fruit unripe, sticks on the tree,
> But fall unshaken when they mellow be.
>   (3.2.179-82)

This speech by the Player King - while Hamlet may intend
it to be directed at Gertrude - actually comments on
Hamlet's own behaviour. The "violent birth" of his
revenge vow in the presence of the ghost is somewhat
mellowed at this point in the play. In the very next
scene, Hamlet becomes so tangled in his thoughts about
possible consequences that he misses an ideal opportunity
to carry out the ghost's revenge order to the letter.

Other examples of memory associated with flower
imagery are to be found at 3.1.152ff and 4.5.155ff. In
the first case, as Hamlet begins to effect his plan for
revenge by assuming the antic disposition, Ophelia sees
Hamlet mad and speaks of the "rose of the fair state" she
once knew now "Blasted with ecstasy". In the parallel
incident where Laertes sees Ophelia mad, he refers to her
as the "rose of May", and asserts that her loss of wits
does most effectively "persuade revenge". In both these

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cases, memory of things in the past evokes the plant

image.

        The play's second theme illustrated with plant

imagery concerns deceit and dissembling. Ophelia alludes

to the deceitful pastors who preach "the steep and thorny

way" while they themselves tread "the primrose path of

dalliance" (1.3.48, 50). Later, in the "nunnery scene",

Hamlet exclaims on his previous offers of love:

        You should not have believed me; for virtue
        cannot so inoculate our old stock but we shall
        relish of it. I loved you not.
    Ophelia. I was the more deceived.   (3.1.117-20)

Hamlet's figure relates to the grafting of shoots onto a

fruit tree. On the same theme Polonius had said to

Ophelia, when she mentioned Hamlet's "tenders Of his

affection":

        Affection? Pooh! You speak like a green girl,
        Unsifted in such perilous circumstance.
                                    (1.3.101-2)

Polonius' figure relates to the separation of grain - the

unripe grain is not yet ready to be separated into its

various grades. Towards the end of the play, the king

conspires with Laertes in order to bring about Hamlet's

death. Claudius' plan proposes not only to deceive Hamlet,

but also to deceive the queen and all in Denmark. The

king says:

> I will work him
> To an exploit now ripe in my device,
> Under the which he shall not choose but fall;
> And for his death no wind of blame shall breathe.
> (4.7.63-6)

In Claudius' figure Hamlet is the piece of fruit which will fall off the life-giving tree in such a way that it will look as if the fruit fell of its own accord, not knocked down by any wind.

While guilt is inextricably tied up with memory, there is a set of flower images especially associated with the theme of guilt in the play. The ghost informs Hamlet of the fact that he was "Cut off even in the blossoms of [his] sin" (1.5.76) and Hamlet later echoes this when he refrains from killing Claudius at prayer. Hamlet remembers that his father died unrepentant, "all his crimes broad blown i.e.[in full bloom], as flush as May" (3.3.81), and he wants Claudius to die the same way. At the performance of the mouse-trap play, Hamlet's excited aside "Wormwood, wormwood!" follows the lines by the Player Queen:

> In second husband let me be accurst!
> None wed the second but who kill'd the first.
> (3.2.170-1)

Hamlet expects that the guilts of both Claudius and Gertrude (whom he suspects as collaborators in the murder)

will begin to stir at this point[1].

Later, in the queen's chamber, Hamlet tells
Gertrude that her guilty act "takes off the rose From
the fair forehead of an innocent love" (3.4.42-3). He
begs her to repent of her guilty relationship with the
murderer:

> Repent what's past; avoid what is to come;
> And do not spread the compost on the weeds
> To make them ranker.   (3.4.150-2)

The ghost too, in his first meeting with Hamlet, had
referred to Gertrude's guilt in terms associated with
plants:

> Leave her to heaven,
> And to those thorns that in her bosom lodge
> To prick and sting her.   (1.5.86-8)

Contrasting with the guilty "weeds" and "thorns" associated
with Gertrude are the "virgin crants" and "maiden strew-
ments" (5.1.218-9) associated with Ophelia's guiltless-
ness and the violets springing "from her fair and unpoll-
uted flesh" (5.1.225).

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1. Dorothy C. Hockey's article "'Wormwood, wormwood!'"
    (English Language Notes, Vol. 2, March 1965, pp. 174-7)
    examines closely the "richly allusive quality" of
    Hamlet's aside. She also points out the importance
    of "Shakespeare's allusive use of herb lore" - "this
    lore formed an important part of English common
    knowledge from at least the eighth century on" (p.
    175).

Thus the significances revealed in the "flower language" of Ophelia's plant-distributing extend beyond that particular scene. The themes of memory, deceit and guilt are consistently illustrated with plant imagery. Flowers and plants were integrally associated with these three themes in Shakespeare's mind as he wrote the play. The basis for the integrated nature of this pattern of imaginative language lay in the commonly understood symbolism of the "language of flowers". Here we have a clear example of Shakespeare's imagery deriving its fullness of meaning from a source in the Elizabethan world of ideas.

ii. <u>The Influence of the Notion of the Body Politic</u>

The second use of imagery in <u>Hamlet</u> which has its source in the commonly held notions of Shakespeare's day concerns the figure of the body politic. There were two minor variations on this notion. The first saw the state as a body where the king was the head, the soldiers and workers the arms and legs, and so on. This is the idea behind Laertes' explanation to Ophelia of Hamlet's royalty:

> on his choice depends
> The safety and health of this whole state,
> And therefore must his choice be circumscrib'd
> Unto the voice and yielding of that body
> Whereof he is the head.   (1.3.20-4)

The other variation saw the king's figure encompassing the whole state, with his body a sum total of his individual

subjects. A pictorial example of this view appeared later

on the title page of Hobbes' Leviathan (1651). This pers-

pective on the body politic lies behind Rosencrantz and

Guildenstern's flowery praise for the king in Act 3, scene

3:

```
Guil.  Most holy and religious fear it is
       To keep those many many bodies safe
       That live and feed upon your majesty
Ros.                  ...
              The cesse of majesty
       Dies not alone...
              ...Never alone
       Did the king sigh, but with a general groan.
                              (3.3.8-10, 15-6, 22-3)
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There is little difference between the two variations.

Both consider the state as a superbeing in human form whose

life and welfare is made up of the lives and welfares of

all the people in the state from king to lowest worker.

The principles for the perfectly functioning state were

based on the principles for the perfectly functioning

body - sound spiritual and physical health.

Apart from the two instances already mentioned

there are a number of images in Hamlet either more or less

directly associated with the concept of the state as a

body. An example is Hamlet's well known rancour at Den-

mark's international reputation for its drinking habits.

The passage in question extends for some twenty-five

lines (1.4.13-38), in which Hamlet's metaphor is clearly

worked out. He speaks of Denmark, its "heavy-headed revel",

and the way "other nations... clip us drunkards and...
Soil our addition". These, he says, correspond to a man,
with "some vicious mole of nature...the stamp of one
defect", who must "in the general censure take corruption
From that particular fault". Hamlet then introduces
another parallel - the "noble substance" which with a
"dram of e'il" brings about its "own scandal". At this
point Hamlet knows nothing of his father's murder. His
series of correspondences gains poignancy in the light of
the later revelations of a king poisoned and a corrupt
murderer ruling the state.

Another instance of body politic imagery is
Claudius' "our whole kingdom...contracted in one brow of
woe" (1.2.3-4), where Claudius's own concern is reflected
in the war preparations designed to strengthen the state.
Also Hamlet's "the purpose of playing...is to hold...the
mirror up to nature; to show...the very age and body of
the time his form" (3.2.20-4) is interesting in this
respect because Hamlet's specific "purpose of playing" is
not to hold a mirror up to the body of people who form
the society of the time, but rather to hold a mirror up
to the body of the king, which he does by presenting the
form of the Player King.

A number of imagery critics have commented on
the disease imagery in <u>Hamlet</u>. Caroline Spurgeon saw the

dominant image in the play as a "foul tumour breaking

inwardly and poisoning the whole body, while showing

'no cause without'"[1]. She took her quotation from Hamlet's

comments on the idle and luxurious state whose values are

corrupted through the lack of exercise of the political

body in warfare:

> This is the imposthume of much wealth and
> peace,
> That inward breaks, and shows no cause
> without
> Why the man dies.   (4.4.27-9)

We are introduced into the play with thoughts on "some

strange eruption" (1.1.69) in the state of Denmark and the

feeling that "Something is rotten" (1.5.90). From the

start of the play we quickly probe into the diseased core

of the country - the rank atmosphere of the royal palace.

Here we are, so to speak, well under the skin of the body

politic; well into the corrupt vital organs of the nation.

The events occurring in the palace have rever-

berations throughout the state. The "eruption" mentioned

in the first scene is the outward sign on the body politic

that something is rotten inside: Claudius' guilt prompts

him to strengthen the defences of the state. The feelings

amongst the common people for Hamlet, and then Laertes,

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1. C. Spurgeon, op. cit. p. 318.

cause Claudius to act in a manner that avoids rebellion from his subjects. We hear the low life characters, the gravediggers, commenting on the recent happenings in Elsinore, and Hamlet's final concern is that the whole truth be reported to the uninformed populace which has been affected by, and has exerted an influence on, the events in the play while remaining always off-stage.

In the passage found at 1.5.61-73 the Ghost explains to Hamlet the circumstances of his murder. When viewed in the light of the body politic imagery used elsewhere in the play the passage takes on a fuller significance. Through the imagery the Ghost describes not only what has happened to his physical body but also what effect his death has had on the state as a whole.

> Upon my secure hour thy uncle stole,
> With juice of cursed hebona in a vial,
> And in the <u>porches of my ears</u> did pour
> The leperous distilment; whose effect
> Holds such an enmity with blood of man
> That swift <u>as quicksilver it courses through</u>
> <u>The natural gates and alleys of the body</u>,
> And with a sudden vigour it doth posset
> And curd, <u>like eager droppings into milk</u>,
> The thin and wholesome blood. So did it mine;
> And a most instant <u>tetter bark'd about</u>,
> <u>Most lazar-like</u>, with vile and loathsome crust
> All my smooth body.

The flow of thought in the passage follows the course of the poison through the king's veins and arteries, with its final symptomatic effect a "tetter" on the skin, but this progress is described metaphorically as the course of a

messenger ("quicksilver" - Mercury the messenger,
presider over roads) through the streets of a city and
beyond, outside the city walls. The process begins in
the "porches" of the king's ears. In Shakespeare's day
a porch was the covered entrance to a great building, for
example, a palace. Old Hamlet's head here represents the
sovereign building in the state - the castle of Elsinore
where the initial foul deed took place. Its effect is
communicated through "gates and alleys" (the body's blood
vessels) to other areas of the city and beyond. The body/
geography metaphor is sustained by the scenes evoked in the
imagery. For example, in contrast to the grand architect-
ure evoked by "porches", the domestic image of the curdling
milk evokes the serving quarters of the big houses or the
simple parlours of the common people.

As the passage progresses the illustrative images
are drawn from progressively lower areas of Elizabethan
life. "Porches" and "quicksilver" connote nobility
(having noble and classical associations: architectural in
the one, and mythological/scientific in the other), the
"alleys" and curdling milk connote lower aspects of living
(the street and the kitchen as opposed to the palace: the
members of the body as opposed to the head). Finally, the
imagery is drawn from areas outside the city wall - "bark'd
about" from the forests, and "lazar-like" from the leper

settlements often surrounding towns in Shakespeare's day.
As the king's body becomes loathesome due to the effect of
the poison (like the "noble substance" degraded by the
"dram of e'il"), so the once healthily ruled nation feels
the effect of corrupt practices perpetrated against its
head of state.

The spreading process is a speedy one, so rapid,
its effects are almost simultaneous with the initial foul
deed. Although the Ghost analyses the process in detail,
he stresses its swiftness - metaphorically it is as if
Mercury himself, not just any human messenger, were the
news carrier. The corruption is almost immediately
recogniseable in the state, as was the tetter "most instant"
upon the body. This is in accordance with the concept
of the body politic where the irreplaceable loss of a good
ruler immediately signified the spiritual and moral decline
of the state. As soon as we enter the play world we are
given the feeling that "Something is rotten". The
immediately recogniseable symptoms of corruption emphasise
Hamlet's delay in applying physic to effect a cure.

So the Ghost imparts to Hamlet a detailed
account of not only the circumstances but also the con-
sequences of his murder. The full significance of the
passage is conveyed with the help of its imagery, the basis
of which can be traced to the popular concept of the body

politic in Shakespeare's day.

iii. <u>The Reiterated Allusions to the Working Classes</u>

The third major use of imagery with a non-
literary source in <u>Hamlet</u> concerns a <u>worker</u> theme. While
the common people are always behind the scenes - preparing
for war, supporting Hamlet, being stirred up by Laertes -
they are brought closer to the audience through imagery
associated with trades and low life. Both W.H. Clemen
and M.M. Morozov have pointed out the "simple and extreme-
ly prosaic images"[1] employed by Hamlet. Unlike Othello,
Hamlet uses no lofty and poetic imagery. His comparisons
are always to the point, and based on keen observation
of all levels of reality. His metaphors succeed in draw-
ing concepts down to earth rather than exaggerating them
into brilliant metaphysical constructions. His speech on
"What a piece of work is man!" (2.2.299ff.) is often
quoted as an example of the noble Elizabethan spirit speak-
ing out in praise of Man as God's wonderful creation. But
this speech is ambiguous. It can also be seen as sarcastic
and degrading, reflecting Hamlet's disillusionment over
the ignobility of the royal family. The "piece of work"
is merely a "quintessense of dust" - God's creation is

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1. M.M. Morozov, "The Individualization of Shakespeare's
   Characters Through Imagery" in <u>Shakespeare Survey</u>,
   Vol. 2, (1949), p. 93.

drawn down below the level of a tradesman's efforts. In the same vein Hamlet says the antics of poor actors suggest that "some of Nature's journeymen had made men" (3.2.32-5): in other words, God must be letting some of his apprentices turn out finished products before they have mastered their trade.

The realistic, common and popular nature of Hamlet's images has been described by W.H. Clemen in these words:

> They are mostly very concrete and precise, simple and, as to their subject matter, easy to understand; common and ordinary things, things familiar to the man in the street dominate...[1]

The overall purpose behind the worker theme is one of levelling. When low life imagery is used by Hamlet against Claudius, (e.g. at 3.2.86-7, 3.4.99, and 4.3.23-4 where the king is associated with pickpockets, cutpurses and beggars) the result is our awareness of the way he has degraded the position of monarch. On the other hand, we hear Hamlet contemplating life through the eyes of the worker. This seems to be natural for him (e.g. at 3.1.70-7: "Who would fardels bear, To grunt and sweat under a heavy life" etc; and at 4.4.33ff: "What is a man, If his chief

1. W.H. Clemen, The Development of Shakespeare's Imagery, (London, 1966), p. 107.

good and market of his time Be but to sleep and feed?"
etc.). The truth about life that is opened up to Hamlet
by this mode of observation lifts our respect for the
plight and life of the worker. The total impression
gained from the worker theme is that all men are equal
in their relationships to life and truth, and that no man,
by economic, social or ideological status, has a greater
right to life or a monopoly on truth.

There are far too many examples of this group
of images for each to be examined separately. However,
a list of the trades referred to will give an idea of the
size of the group. There are references to these occupations:
ale-house keeper, apprentice, baker, barber, bawd, black-
smith, builder, butcher, carpenter, carter, cooper, ditch-
digger, engineer, engraver, farmer, fisherman, fish-
monger, gallows-maker, gardener, gravedigger, gunner,
inventor, jig-maker, labourer, marketer, mason, mechanic,
miner, musician, orchardist, pirate, pioner, player,
sailor, sergeant, shipwright, soldier, steward, stone-
mason, tailor, tanner, thief, towncrier, watchman and
yeoman. In the imaginative language of the play, Shakes-
peare makes use of particular attributes or behaviours of
tradesmen, as well as applying in metaphor detailed know-
ledge of the craftmanship practised within the trades.
Most of this knowledge could not have come from books, but

rather from Shakespeare's observation and experience of
the life around him.

Some of the more notable examples occur in Shakes-
peare's use of the carpenter's trade. As these examples
show, it is not only Hamlet who employs such imagery. In
his first speech, Claudius uses the image "Our state dis-
joint and out of frame" (1.2.20). Similar terms of refer-
ence are used by Hamlet: "The time is out of joint"
(1.5.189); "this goodly frame, the earth" (2.2.294). He
uses carpentry in describing the actions of the human body:
"do not saw the air too much with your hand" (3.2.4);
"crook the pregnant hinges of the knee" (3.2.59); while
Guildenstern says to Hamlet: "put your discourse into some
frame" (3.2.293). Rosencrantz speaks of the king as "a
massy wheel" to which his subjects are "mortis'd and
adjoin'd" (3.3.17, 20).

Other interesting examples of figures taken from
various trades include Polonius'

     laying these slight sullies on my son
  As 'twere a thing a little soil'd i' th' working.
                   (2.1.39-40)

The figure comes from the tailor's trade. Polonius also
draws on the work of the cooper: "Grapple them unto thy
soul with hoops of steel" (1.3.63). Hamlet's lines at
5.2.10-11 derive from the stonemason's work:

> There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
> Rough-hew them how we will.   (5.2.10-11)

Some of the worker imagery used by Shakespeare
lifts the language of the play to a high poetic level.
Marcellus describes the exceptional industry in the state
where "the night" is "joint-labourer with the day" (1.1.78)
and Horatio speaks of "the morn in russet mantle clad"
(1.2.166), the russet coat being the usual homespun work
clothes of the lower classes. On a number of occasions,
attention is called to the nobility of various trades
where it is pointed out that some of the classical gods
and Bible characters were tradesmen. There are "the
Cyclops' hammers" falling "On Mars's armour, forg'd for
proof eterne" (2.2.477-8), and "Vulcan's stithy" (followed
closely by Hamlet's "I mine eyes will rivet to his face" -
3.2.82, 83). The grave-digger gives evidence for the
nobility of his job by saying:

> There is no ancient gentlemen but gard'ners,
> ditchers, and gravemakers. They hold up Adam's
> profession.   (5.1.27-9)

Hamlet's advice to the players in Act 3 scene 2
is the most sustained passage written by Shakespeare on
his own craft. Undoubtedly, the workshop he knew best
was the theatre itself, and it is not surprising to find
in the wealth of imagery derived from the workaday world a
strong influence from aspects of Shakespeare's own occupation.

When Hamlet says "this goodly frame, the earth, seems to me a sterile promontory" we can see him looking around the Globe theatre and finally letting his eyes rest on the bare platform of the proscenium. Then, with "this most excellent canopy, the air, look you, this brave O'er-hanging firmament, this majestical roof fretted with golden fire", Hamlet's eyes travel up to the painted "Heavens" above the stage, to come down again and rest finally on the sweaty-capped heads of the pit audience - the "pestilent congregation of vapours" (2.2.294-8).

Elsewhere Hamlet's imagery reflects features of the dramatist's craft. He talks of the "trappings and the suits of woe" and the "actions that a man might play", whereas, he says, he has "that within which passes show" (1.2.84-6). The original foul deed and the revenge Hamlet must undertake are continually referred to as "acts" (1.5.84; 3.2.76; 3.4.40, 51; 5.2.321; 5.2.367) and Hamlet sees his participation as a "poor part" (1.5.131) in which he is "prompted by heaven and hell" (2.2.570). Near to death he speaks of those

> that look pale and tremble at this chance,
> That are but mutes or audience to this act...
> (5.2.320-1)

Hamlet refers to Claudius' attempt to dispose of him en route to England in these terms: "Or I could make a

prologue to my brains, They had begun the play" (5.2.30-1);
and Horatio and Gertrude use the same term in their
"prologue to the omen" (1.1.123) and "each toy seems pro-
logue to some great amiss" (4.5.18).

Returning to the quotation with which I started
in on the worker theme - "What a piece of work is man!" -
Shakespeare nowhere else uses the phrase "piece of work"
more than once in a play, yet he repeats it three times in
Hamlet. First he uses it to describe man (2.2.299), second
to describe a play (3.2.44-5) and third to describe a
murder presented in that play (3.2.230). The repetitions
focus on the purpose behind Shakespeare's use of theatrical
imagery in Hamlet. He seems to be suggesting that there is
something unreal, something that eludes the grasp of the
sensible mind, in even the hardest felt facts of existence.
Nothing is more important to Hamlet than his father's
death, yet that critical event, far from bringing him into
immediate contact with the exigencies of life, leaves him
wandering about life's stage like an actor trying to play
a part he just cannot get involved in.

Although a prince, Hamlet is at ease conversing
with the lower orders of society: with the soldiers in the
early scenes, the players, the pirates, and the grave-
diggers. He has no trouble communicating with them.
Actually, he appears more at ease in low society than in

high society. In the use of low life and worker imagery
continued throughout the play Shakespeare wished to
stress the universality of Hamlet's situation. Here was
not a prince with an esoteric problem, but a man confronted
by life's hostility and difficulty. The carpenter, carter
and cooper belonged in the play because they too must face
dilemma and tragedy. The relevance of the Hamlet conflict
to the common man is felt in the play's imaginative
language.

The influence of non-literary sources on the
imagery of Hamlet was extremely strong. Shakespeare had
the ability to incorporate the topical and the mundane in
his work without ever losing universality and freshness.
Thus, through the imagery, he catered for the full range
of intellectual capacities represented in his audiences.
Every man found a strand of meaning running through the
drama with which he could identify. This quality in
Shakespeare's art derives from his sensitivity to all
levels of experience - imaginative, intellectual and
sensual - which presented themselves to him in the world
of his time.

"Hamlet" and "The Spanish Tragedy": A Search for Hints
of a Major Literary Source for Imagery.

A considerable amount of scholarly energy has
been expended in attempts to reconstruct the Ur-Hamlet.[1]
Many suggestions have been made regarding its authorship,
plot structure and language style. While its existence was
alluded to on a number of occasions,[2] these references tell
little about the actual nature and qualities of the
Ur-Hamlet. Even the authorship attributed to Kyd, is not
absolutely certain. Nashe's allusion is suggestive, but
by no means definitive.[3]

Reconstructions have been made on the basis of
similarities between The Spanish Tragedy and Hamlet, and
on the basis of differences between the Quarto versions

1. See for example H.D. Gray, "Reconstruction of a Lost
   Play", in Philological Quarterly, Vol. 7, (1928), pp.
   254-74; W.W. Lawrence, "Hamlet and Fortinbras" in
   PMLA, Vol. 61, (1946), pp. 673-98; F.T. Bowers,
   Elizabethan Revenge Tragedy 1587-1642, (Massachusetts
   1959), pp. 62-100; K. Muir, Shakespeare's Sources,
   (London 1957), pp. 112-6.
2. In Nashe's introduction to Greene's Menaphon (1589); in
   Philip Henslowe's diary (June, 1594); in Lodge's Wit's
   Miserie (1596); and in Dekker's Satiromastix (1601).
3. In this discussion I am indebted to G.I. Duthie's com-
   prehensive examination of the facts in The 'Bad' Quarto
   of "Hamlet": A Critical Study, (Cambridge, 1941). Other
   opinions have been put forward by E.E. Stoll, "Hamlet
   and The Spanish Tragedy Quartos I and II: A Protest" in
   Modern Philology, Vol. 35, pp. 31-46, and "Hamlet and
   The Spanish Tragedy Again", in Modern Philology, Vol. 37,
   (1939), pp. 173-86; F.S. Boas in the introduction to
   Kyd's Works, (Oxford, 1901), pp. xlv-liv; F.T. Bowers,
   "Alphonsus, Emperor of Germany, and the Ur-Hamlet" in
   Modern Language Notes, Vol. 48, (1933), pp. 101-8; R.A.
   Law, "Belleforest, Shakespeare and Kyd" in Adams Memorial
   Studies, (1948), pp. 279-94; H.R. Walley, "Shakespeare's
   Conception of Hamlet", in PMLA, Vol. 48, (1933), pp.
   777-98; and K. Muir, op. cit. pp. 110-8.

of _Hamlet_. The existence of a German Hamlet play, _Der Bestrafte Brudermord_, has also affected reconstructions. The earliest extant copy of this play bears the date 1710, but it was acted in Dresden in 1626 and perhaps there were earlier unrecorded performances.

In spite of the many assertions put forward by reconstructors, present knowledge of the problem is limited to the following. Indications are that there was a Hamlet play, most likely not part-Shakespearean, before 1589. It was Senecan in flavour but the evidence does not prove conclusively that it was written by Kyd. While there are substantial parallels between _The Spanish Tragedy_ and the Q1 version of _Hamlet_ these may not indicate that Q1 came before Q2 as a less sophisticated attempt by Shakespeare based more closely on the _Ur-Hamlet_, for Q1 could be a memorial reconstruction of Q2 in which the reporter has confused similar lines in the two plays by Kyd and Shakespeare. On top of this, _Der Bestrafte Brudermord_ might not represent a mid-way point in the _Ur-Hamlet_ to _Hamlet_ evolution either. Before it found its way to Germany, it was very likely a stage script prepared from Q1 for acting in the English provinces. Thus in spite of the similarities we can with no certainty claim that either _The Spanish Tragedy_ or the First Quarto edition of _Hamlet_ or _Der Bestrafte Brudermord_ was involved

in any recasting undertaken by Shakespeare in his creation
of the Q2 Hamlet.

Nor is there conclusive proof that either of
these three candidates for the title of forerunner to the
Q2 Hamlet is in any definite way able to provide indications
of what the Ur-Hamlet was like. Nevertheless, some
scholars have suggested that because Kyd is the most likely
dramatist responsible for the Ur-Hamlet, and because The
Spanish Tragedy can be seen as the Hamlet story thinly
masked, then the Ur-Hamlet probably treated of themes and
incidents in a similar manner to The Spanish Tragedy.
Indeed, The Spanish Tragedy may represent Kyd's own
sophistication of his earlier Hamlet drama. Thus Shakes-
peare's Q2 Hamlet and The Spanish Tragedy may be two
different dramatists' reworkings of the same old revenge
play. This hypothesis suggests that an examination of
the imagery in the two plays could reveal imagery common
to The Spanish Tragedy and Hamlet which has developed out
of imagery in the Ur-Hamlet.

Unfortunately the parallels in the imaginative
language of the two plays are few, and those that do
occur seem to convey little information about the imagery
in the Ur-Hamlet. In The Spanish Tragedy the Viceroy
exclaims that his ear is ready to receive ill news because
his heart is strengthened "gainst mischiefes battery"

(S.T.1.4.57)[1]. This may hold some relationship with
Claudius' chiding of Hamlet over his "unmanly" reaction
to the knowledge of his father's death, where he re-
primands Hamlet for having "A heart unfortified" (Ham
1.2.96). Later in The Spanish Tragedy Hieronimo speaks
of "Nemesis, and Furies, And things called whippes"
(S.T.3.6.42-3). Boas suggests this phrase "comes probably
from the old Hamlet"[2] and he cites Robert Armin's Nest
of Ninnies (1608; p. 55): "Ther are, as Hamlet saies
things cald whips in stor". If Armin was thinking of the
Ur-Hamlet, Hamlet's "the whips and scorns of time" (Ham
3.1.70) and his "I must be heaven's scourge and minister"
(Ham 3.4.175) may be derived from an image used in the
old Hamlet play. On the other hand, Armin may be con-
fusing these lines in Hamlet with the lines in The
Spanish Tragedy or even with 2 Henry VI, 2.1.136, where
the phrase "things call'd whips" occurs again.

Hieronimo recognises a reflection of his own
situation in the plight of the Old Man:

        I in thy mishaps may see
    The lively portraict of my dying self.
                    (S.T.3.13.84-5)

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1. All quotations from The Spanish Tragedy are taken from
   The Works of Thomas Kyd, ed. F.S. Boas, (Oxford, 1901).
2. F.S. Boas, op. cit. p. 405.

Hamlet says of Laertes:

> by the image of my cause I see
> The portraiture of his.   (<u>Ham</u> 5.2.77-8)

Another image parallel is to be found in the descriptions
of the heroines of both plays. Balthazar says that he is
"Led by the loadstar of Bel-imperia's heavenly lookes"
(<u>S.T.</u>3.10.106). In Shakespeare's play Hamlet says of
Ophelia: "Here's metal more attractive" (<u>Ham</u> 3.2.105).

Perhaps a more promising parallel occurs in both
plays where theatrical terms enter the imaginative language.
Shakespeare has incorporated the language of the theatre
into his play to illustrate various notions held by his
characters, especially in Hamlet's punning use of terms
such as "act", "prologue", and playing a "part". In <u>The</u>
<u>Spanish Tragedy</u> similar use is made of theatrical language.
Hieronimo speaks of Lorenzo and Balthazar as "actors in
th' accursed Tragedie" of the death of his son (<u>S.T.</u>
3.7.41) long before he stages the performance of his fatal
play. Like Shakespeare in <u>Hamlet</u>, Kyd uses the words
"plot", "part" and "acting" in expeditious ways (<u>S.T.</u>
4.1.51; 4.3.28, 30), and amongst Hieronimo's final words
are the lines:

> thus I end my play;
> Urge no more words: I have no more to say...
> (4.4.151-2)

> Now do I applaud what I have acted...
> Now to expresse the rupture of my part,
> First take my tongue, and afterward my heart.
> (4.4.214, 216-7)

These lines could be related to a number of Hamlet's
speeches, especially where he speaks of his "own poor
part" in the revenge plot (Ham 1.5.131) and, towards the
end of the play, where he talks about the people "That
are but mutes or audience to this act" (Ham 5.2.321).
His final words "the rest is silence" (Ham 5.2.344)
have much in common with the lines spoken by Hieronimo.

Other parallels exist in Kyd's and Shakespeare's
plant imagery (S.T. 1.4.4, cf. Ham 3.1.152; and S.T.
2.4.70, cf. Ham 1.5.32-3) and in the use of low-life
language and coarse expressions by both dramatists (e.g.
S.T. 1.4.22; Ham 5.1.94)

This list of parallels is not very informative
except perhaps in the case of the theatrical imagery found
in both plays. It is possible that imagery associated with
the theatre was developed throughout the Ur-Hamlet which
many scholars believe made use of a play-within-the-play
device. On the other hand, Shakespeare may have derived
the play-within-the-play device from The Spanish Tragedy
itself, remembering, along with the borrowing, how Kyd
had incorporated some theatrical terms into the speeches
of the protagonist.

To evaluate the results of the comparison of
imagery in these two plays Kyd's practice of imagery over-
lap from play to play must first be examined. If his other
plays have no imagery in common there is no reason to
suspect that The Spanish Tragedy need contain imagery
used in the Ur-Hamlet. It seems that Kyd's practice was,
on occasions, to repeat striking figures of speech he had
used previously. F.S. Boas notes a dozen imagery parallels
between The Spanish Tragedy, Cornelia and Soliman and
Perseda. The following two examples are included by Boas:

> my lament...
> Disroabde the medowes of their flowred greene,
> Made mountains marsh with spring tides of my
> tears.   (S.T. 3.7.6-8)
>
> And with their blood made marsh the parched
> plains   (Cornelia 1.40)
>
> And dewe yourselues with springtides of your
> teares.   (Cornelia 5.420)
>
> My hart (sweet friend) is like a ship at sea:
> She wisheth port, where riding all at ease
> She may repaire what stormie times haue worne...
>   (S.T. 2.2.7-9)
>
>   vntill my wandring eye
> Should finde a harbour for my hart to dwell.
>   (Soliman and Perseda 1.2.35-6)

On the basis of these findings it appears probable
that some of the imagery of the Ur-Hamlet would reappear in
The Spanish Tragedy. This combined with the fact that
Shakespeare was rarely loath to capitalise on striking
imagery in his sources would suggest that at least one

or two significant parallels would be found in The Spanish

Tragedy and Hamlet. Unfortunately none of the imagery

parallels found in the two plays can be called significant

or convincing. There do remain possibilities, and I will

say more about these in tracing the small amount of imagery

which appears in Belleforest's Histoires Tragiques and

reappears in both The Spanish Tragedy and Hamlet, but an

imagery comparison technique can contribute little solid

evidence in solving the mystery of the Ur-Hamlet's internal

nature.[1]

"Hamlet" and Belleforest

In the absence of an extant version of the Ur-Hamlet

scholars have turned to the Ur-Hamlet's likely sources -

the Hamlet story in Belleforest and Saxo Grammaticus. One

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1. I have briefly considered the Senecan quality of Hamlet's
   imagery in the previous chapter (pp.106-7). The Senecan
   influence is much less discernible in the imagery of
   Hamlet than in the imagery of Macbeth, which is perhaps
   surprising since the possibly influential Ur-Hamlet has
   often been claimed to have been strongly Senecan flav-
   oured. Those who have undertaken studies of the Senecan
   aspects of Hamlet include F.R. Johnson, "Shakespearian
   Imagery and Senecan Imitation" in Adams Memorial Studies,
   ed. McManaway, et al, (Washington, 1948), pp. 43-50;
   E.M. Spearing, Introduction to Studley's translation of
   Seneca's Agamemnon and Medea, (Vaduz, 1963), Section V;
   and B.L. Joseph, "The Spanish Tragedy and Hamlet: Two
   Exercises in English Seneca" in Classical Drama and Its
   Influence, ed. M. Anderson, (New York, 1965), pp.119-34.

critic has suggested that Shakespeare himself went direct to these source works[1], but the general concensus does not support this strongly. Most critics have looked into these older works to aid reconstruction of the Ur-Hamlet. An imagery comparison bears little fruit in the case of Saxo Grammaticus, but there are more promising relationships between the imagery of Hamlet and aspects of Belleforest's Hamlet story[2].

It is of interest to note that Belleforest developed a theme in his history which involved the three notions of the actor, his clothing and make-up, and the taking on of a madman's role.

Belleforest described Amleth's feigned madness in terms relevant to a player's acting of a part in a play:

> ...le Prince Amleth...contrefeist le fol, avec telle ruse, et subtilité, qu'il faignit d'avoir tout perdu le sens, et soyz un tel voile il couvrist ses desseins...[3]

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1. See A.P. Stabler, "King Hamlet's Ghost in Belleforest?" in PMLA, Vol. 77, (1962), pp. 18-20, and "Melancholy, Ambition and Revenge in Belleforest's Hamlet" in PMLA, Vol. 81, (1966), pp. 207-13.
2. References to Belleforest's Hamlet story come from "Le Cinqviesme Tome des Histoires Tragiqves" (Paris, 1582), edited by Sir I. Gollancz in The Sources of "Hamlet", (London, 1926), reprinted by Octagon Books, (New York, 1967).
3. Sir I. Gollancz, op. cit., p. 192. The English translation of 1608 - The Hystorie of Hamblet - is printed parallel to the French text: "the prince Hamblet... counterfeiting the mad man with such craft and subtill practises, that he made shewe as if hee had utterly lost his wittes; and under that vayle hee covered his pretence..." (p. 193).

The prince tears his clothes and applies make-up of dirt and mud in order to look the part he is playing. The change in his facial appearance was expressed clearly in terms of putting on a player's mask:

> Le visage de un insensé me duit, pour y couvrir mes gaillardises...[1]

Amleth also reproduces the actions and gestures of the madman:

> ...tout ses actions et gestes, n'estoyent que les contenances d'un homme qui est privé de toute raison et entendement.[2]

He says of the act he is forced to perform:

> je sois contrainct de faire le fol, et imite les façons de faire d'un insensé pour sauver ma vie...Ce n'est sans cause et juste occasion que mes gestes, contenances et parolles resentent le fol...[3]

At the point of effecting his revenge, Amleth abandons "les actions, et le geste et la billement d'un incensé"[4]. He throws off the mask of ineffectual stupidity to further

---

1. P.216. "The face of a mad man serveth to cover my gallant countenance" (p. 217).
2. P.194. "...all his actions and jestures beeing no other than the right countenances of a man wholly deprived of all reason and understanding" (p. 195).
3. P. 214. "I am constrained to playe the madde man to save my life...It was not without cause, and juste occasion, that my gestures, countenances, and words, seeme all to proceed from a madman..." (p. 215).
4. P.254. "the actions, gestures, and apparel of a mad man" (p. 255).

his desired ends. No longer does he need "dissimuler les apprehensions par art"[1] once he puts into practice the denouement of his revenge plot, which he achieves by destroying the king and his corrupt nobility.

Speaking about the revenge to which the ghost has "prompted" him (2.2.570), and the antic disposition he must put on, Shakespeare's Hamlet refers to his "own poor part" (1.5.131) in "Th' important acting" of the ghost's "dread command" (3.4.108). He interprets the conflict between himself and Claudius in theatrical terms:

> Or I could make a prologue to my brains,
> They had begun the play,   (5.2.30-1)

and refers to those not directly involved in this conflict as the "audience to this act" (5.2.321).

Both Shakespeare and Belleforest saw the revenge roles taken on by their protagonists in the terms of an actor playing a part in a play, as too did Kyd with Hieronimo in The Spanish Tragedy. It is possible that this attitude towards the protagonist was also developed in the Ur-Hamlet, considering that Belleforest's story was most likely the direct source for the old Hamlet play. Thus the highly developed theatre theme in Shakespeare's play may trace back to the guise put on by Belleforest's Amleth.

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1. P. 198. "to dissemble or hyde [his feelings] by art" (p. 199).

The antic disposition, the purpose of the Player's speech
to reveal to Hamlet his inadequacies, the troupe of roving
actors, the play-within-the-play device, and the theatrical
imagery, may all have had their original impetus in Belle-
forest's simple treatment of a prince playing the part of
a madman to save his life and gain his desired ends.[1]
Shakespeare's theatrical imagery is skilfully woven into
the main themes of the play. Obviously its details derived
from his first-hand knowledge of the theatre. But the
theatrical theme may have linked itself to the Hamlet story
in Shakespeare's immediate source because of Belleforest's
suggestive passages on Amleth's role-playing.

Shakespeare could have found other aspects of
Hamlet's imagery in Belleforest. The French historian tells
of

> la puissance du tyran, lequel pourchassoit les
> moyens de envelopper le fils és pieques, esquels
> le pere avoit finy ses jours.[2]

Belleforest adds that Amleth's uncle wants him "luy faire

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1. The technique was common in medieval stories. For
   example, Tristan's madman performance took him through
   the castle fortifications right into Iseult's chamber.
   David's playing the madman in 1 Samuel 21:13-5 probably
   influenced medieval storytellers.
2. p.200. "[the power of] the tirant, who by all meanes
   sought to intangle the sonne in the same nets wherein
   the father had ended his dayes". (p. 201).

de luy-mesme se prendre <u>au filet</u>"[1] that Fengon has prepared.

These ideas are very close to Hamlet's "Being thus <u>benetted round</u> with villainies" (5.2.29) prepared by Claudius.

In the chamber scene of Belleforest's history Amleth points out to Geruthe that

> les Roys sacrez ... sont les amis et compaignons des Dieux, et ceux qui representent leur majesté, et image.[2]

This quotation parallels Hamlet's speech in Gertrude's chamber where he shows her "The counterfeit presentment of two brothers". He describes Old Hamlet's features and virtues as

> A combination and a form indeed
> Where every god did seem to set his seal.
> (3.4.60-1)

In the same scene Geruthe sees in Amleth "la vive image" of King Horvendile, his father[3]. While Shakespeare's Hamlet is quick to point out his deficiencies in the light of the example set by his father, he does use a similar phrase in speaking of Laertes:

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1. P.204. "of his own accord to fall into the <u>net</u>" (p.205).
2. P.226. "sacred kings...are friends and companions of the gods, as representing their majestie and persons" (p.227).
3. P.218. The translation of 1608 renders this as "the lively image and portraiture". It seems that the English translator here, as elsewhere (see for example his insertion of "A rat, a rat!" p.207), was influenced by Shakespeare's play, or the <u>Ur-Hamlet</u>.

by the image of my cause I see
         The   portraiture of his.   (5.2.77-8)

Shakespeare's Hamlet is more modestly drawn than Belle-
forest's hero. Hamlet says Claudius is "no more like my
father Than I to Hercules" (1.2.152-3), and on three more
occasions he uses Hercules in comparisons of his own and
others' strengths and weaknesses (1.4.83; 2.2.352; 5.1.278).
Saxo Grammaticus had alluded to "Herculia opera"[1] and Belle-
forest refers to Hercules twice - once in saying "il semb-
leroit veoir en Amleth un Hercule"[2]. Shakespeare has to
a certain extent reversed the sentiment, stressing Hamlet's
weaknesses against his strengths, but the dramatist, to
illustrate the point, has used the same classical allusion
that appeared in the old French version of the story.

        As part of the same theme, Belleforest on several
occasions makes metaphorical use of the notion of a man
carrying a burden. One of these instances is particularly
interesting in connection with Shakespeare's play. Amleth's
harangue to the Danes includes the following description of
Fengon: "ce miserable, accablé du fardeau de ses forfaits"[3].

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1. Sir I. Gollancz, op. cit. p. 162.
2. P.286. "it seemeth, Hamlet should resemble another
   Hercules" (p.287).
3. P.268. "this miserable wretch, pressed downe with the
   burthen of his offences" (p.269).

This finds strong echoes in Hamlet's "Who would <u>fardels</u> bear...?" (3.1.76) which follows closely after the aside in which we are first assured of Claudius' guilt. Here the murderer feels the weight of his offences as a "heavy burden" (3.1.54).

From the foregoing it appears that Belleforest's version of the Hamlet story had a small influence on the imagery of Shakespeare's play. Whether this influence was direct or indirect (through the <u>Ur-Hamlet</u>) is something that will not be ascertained until knowledge of the <u>Ur-Hamlet</u> is based on facts rather than on conjecture.

"<u>Hamlet</u>", <u>Bright and Nashe</u>

Two works that exerted an influence on the writing of <u>Hamlet</u> were Timothy Bright's <u>A Treatise of Melancholie</u> (1586) and Thomas Nashe's <u>Pierce Penilesse His Supplication to the Devil</u> (1592). Shakespeare seems to have taken a number of ideas and turns of phrase from Bright's <u>Treatise of Melancholie</u>.[1] John Dover Wilson has listed a score of

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1. Bright's influence has been discussed by M.I. O'Sullivan in "<u>Hamlet</u> and Dr. Timothy Bright", <u>PMLA</u>, Vol. 41, (1926), pp. 667-79; A.P. Stabler in "Melancholy, Ambition and Revenge in Belleforest's Hamlet", <u>PMLA</u>, Vol. 81, (1966), pp. 207-13; and J. Dover Wilson in <u>What Happens in "Hamlet"</u>, (Cambridge, 1951), pp. 309-20. References to Bright's <u>Treatise</u> are taken from the excerpts reprinted by Wilson in Appendix E of his book. Wilson used the 1586 edition printed by T. Vautrollier.

parallels between Bright's Treatise and Hamlet, many of
which concern the imagery of the play. These include the
following:

> The ayre meet for melancholicke folke, ought
> to be...open and patent to all winds: in
> respect of their temper, especially to the
> South, and Southeast.
> (Treatise p.257)

> I am but mad north-north-west. When the wind
> is southerly I know a hawk from a handsaw.
> (Ham 2.2.368-9)

> *   *   *   *   *   *

> There keep the straightest hand, where the lists
> of reason are most like to be broken through.
> (Treatise p.250)
> ...dispossessing reason of her watchtower...
> (Treatise p. 3)

> *   *   *   *   *

> Oft breaking down the pales and forts of reason.
> (Ham 1.4.28)

> *   *   *   *   *

> ...the bodie of earth...did as it were hatch that
> great egge of Chaos.
> (Treatise p.37)

> ...his melancholy sits on brood;
> And I do doubt the hatch and the disclose
> Will be some danger.
> (Ham 3.1.165-7)

> *   *   *   *   *   *

> The braine as tender as a posset curd...
> (Treatise p.13)
> Melancholy blood is thicke and grosse...
> (Treatise p.270)

> it doth posset
> And curd, like eager droppings into milk,
> The thin and wholesome blood.
> (Ham 1.5.68-70)

> *   *   *   *   *

> ...to disturbe the goodly order disposed by
> iust proportion in our bodies: & putting the
> parts of that most consonant and pleasant
> harmony out of tune... (Treatise p.250)

> Like sweet bells jangled, out of tune and harsh;
> That unmatch'd form and feature of blown youth
> Blasted with ecstasy.   (Ham 3.1.158-60)

* * *

> ...the moving engine as it were animated with
> the minde of the worker. (Treatise p.64)

This is one of many passages where Bright likens the work-

ings of the body to a machine. Shakespeare seems to echo

this in

> ...whilst this machine is to him... (Ham 2.2.123-4)

* * *

> Melancholie...[is] plentifully replenished with
> such [spirits] as...shut up the hart as it were in
> a dungeon of obscurity, causeth manie fearefull
> fancies, by abusing the braine with vglie illus-
> ions, and locketh up the gates of the heart...
>   (Treatise p.100)

> The house...seemeth vnto the melancholicke a prison
> or dungeon, rather than a place of assured repose
> and rest.   (Treatise p.263)

> I could be bounded in a nutshell and count myself
> a king of infinite space, were it not that I have
> bad dreams.   (Ham 2.2.250-2)

> Denmark's a prison...there are many confines,
> wards, and dungeons, Denmark being one o' th'
> worst.   (Ham 2.2.240, 242-3)

Much of the discussion in the Treatise was devoted

to the psychology of the worker. This may have prompted

Shakespeare's interest in the worker theme in Hamlet.

Bright considered occupation of the mind and body important

in warding off melancholy, and in connection with this he
examined the jobs of the mariner, butcher, and plowman.
He also mentioned the carpenter, axeman, mechanic, sailor
and musician to illustrate the workings of the human body
(Treatise pp.61-4; cf. Ham 3.2.4; 3.2.59).

      To illustrate Hamlet's melancholic disposition
Shakespeare used parallel imagery to that used by Bright
in his descriptions of melancholia. The commentators have
agreed that Shakespeare read Bright's work, but Dr Bright's
definitive Elizabethan psychology, along with the images
used to illustrate it, may have had a greater currency in
contemporary conversation than Wilson and O'Sullivan suppose.
The imagery Bright used (and Shakespeare appears to have
borrowed) was mostly of a type - based on an order/disorder
comparison, and drawn from sources in the everyday world -
which involved simple figures to illustrate complex psychol-
ogical notions. It seems unreasonable to doubt that Bright's
work was the ultimate source for these images in Hamlet,
but there does remain the possibility that Shakespeare was
appealing to his audience's common knowledge of Elizabethan
psychology, in which case Shakespeare himself may be indebt-
ed to popular hearsay rather than to a reading of the
original treatise (in much the same way that a modern author
might invoke Freud's terminology without himself having
read Freud and without expecting that his audience should

have done so).

In _Hamlet_ Shakespeare echoes several themes
treated by Nashe in his _Pierce Penilesse_ pamphlet. In it
the behaviour and power of devils are discussed. Mention
is made of the poor soul who, frightened by a devil, will
"run mad through excessive melancholy"; and the practice
of devils who "terrify men in the likeness of dead men's
ghosts in the night-time".[1] Nashe discusses the murderer
who will "kill a man and then mourne for him" and men who
"will swear and protest love...and smile on him most kindly,
whose subversion in soul they have vowed" (cf. _Ham_ 1.5.106,
108; 5.2.238).

Nashe devotes several pages to the "swinish"
Danes (cf. _Ham_ 1.4.19) and their international reputation
for drunkardness. In the same section, the general theme
of which is pride, Nashe attacks the face-painting and
precious speech of females (cf. _Ham_ 3.1.142-4) as well as
including a discourse on how the symptoms of old age and
venereal disease may be covered by painting and wigs (cf.
Ham 3.1.51-2; 5.1.152-4)[2]

1. These quotations occur in the final section of the
   pamphlet, found in G.R. Hibbard's edition, _Three Elizab-_
   ethan Pamphlets, (London, 1951), pp. 133-59.
2. The section on pride is found in G.R. Hibbard, _op. cit._,
   pp. 94-7.

Another section of Nashe's pamphlet deals with "the use and defense of plays"[1]. Here Nashe enters a topical discussion about players as Shakespeare does in Acts 2 and 3. Nashe says the reciting of "stately verse" must "trip it...smoothly" (cf. Ham 3.2.2.) and he compares the present English tragic actors with those "in the time of Roscius" (cf. Ham 2.2.380).

Pierce Penilesse was a popular pamphlet in its day, and Shakespeare undoubtedly read it. The themes Nashe treated were common conversation topics in London in the Late Elizabethan era, and by evoking these in Hamlet Shakespeare was appealing to the understanding which accompanies the topical interests of an audience. The parallels in the language of the two works do not necessarily indicate direct borrowing. However, the parallels are all of a kind: they concern the expression of popular social issues in common speech[2].

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1. G.R. Hibbard, op. cit. pp. 128-32.
2. Two other literary sources, suggested by W.S.Fox and K. Garvin, may have directly influenced the imagery of isolated passages in the play. In "Lucian in the Grave Scene of Hamlet" (Philological Quarterly, Vol. 2, (1923), pp. 132-41) Fox has examined the themes and language of the graveyard scene and found that Hamlet's allusion to Alexander the Great, his reflections on the lives of courtiers and politicians, and his preoccupation with the evanescence of beauty and the space occupied by a corpse, all reveal the dramatist's acquaintance with Lucian's Dialogues of the Dead. In "'Slings and Arrows'" (Review of English Literature, Vol. 8, No. 3, (1967), pp. 96-8) Garvin has suggested that the imagery used in Hamlet's fourth soliloquy finds a source in Golding's translation of Caesar's description of the invasion of Britain. A link is seen between Hamlet's "take arms against a sea of troubles" and the attempt made to repulse the Roman invasion.

In toto, those extant literary works recognised as either direct or indirect sources for _Hamlet_ provide only a small amount of information about the origins of the play's imagery. With the exception, perhaps, of Bright's _Treatise of Melancholie_, none of these works can be said to have exerted an influence which produced a distinctive strain of imaginative language in the play. In the imagery of _Hamlet_ the influence of non-literary sources can be readily assessed, but the extent of borrowing from the major literary source remains a mystery. What can be said, however, is that in drawing important aspects of _Hamlet_'s imagery from non-literary sources in the world around him, Shakespeare anchored one of his most intellectually challenging plays firmly in the everyday world of human experience.

CHAPTER FOUR

OTHELLO

The Hecatommithi of Giovanni Battista Geraldi
Cinthio was first published in Venice around 1565. Almost
twenty years later, a French translation by Gabriel Chappuys
appeared in Paris. The main problem in source studies of
Othello to date has concerned the question 'Which version
of the Cinthio story did Shakespeare use?' Since both were
available to him, and since there is equally little factual
data relating to Shakespeare's ability in reading either
French or Italian, the question is something of a thorn in
the source critic's side.

The majority of source critics have espoused the
original Italian, citing as justification for their choice
first, Shakespeare's probable friendship with the Italian
translator John Florio, and second, the fact that the
dramatist appears to have used Cinthio's collection of tales,
together with a play by the same author, as source material
for Measure for Measure, written in the same year as
Othello (1604). Amongst these critics are H.B. Charlton
and Kenneth Muir, whose observations in this area have been

influential.[1] However, there are others, headed by Ned

B. Allen, who have consistently agitated for Chappuys'

translation to be recognised as the major source.[2] There

is yet another group, represented by E.A.J. Honigmann,

which has opted for the compromise solution where Shakespeare

either read both Italian and French versions or had

access to a now-vanished English translation which used

both Cinthio and Chappuys as sources.[3]

The most notable feature of the debate between

pro-Cinthio and pro-Chappuys critics has been their willing-

ness to place great emphasis on very slender evidence. An

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1. See H.B. Charlton, Shakespearian Tragedy, (Cambridge,
   1948), pp. 113-40; and K. Muir, Shakespeare's Sources,
   (London, 1957), pp. 122-7. See also E.E. Stoll,
   "Source and Motive in Macbeth and Othello", in Review
   of English Studies, Vol. 19, (1943), pp. 28-31;
   Maurianne S. Adams, "'Ocular Proof' in Othello and its
   Source", PMLA, Vol. 79; (1964), pp. 234-41; and A.J.
   Hiken, "Shakespeare's Othello and its Source", Teachers
   College Record, Vol. 66, (Dec. 1964), pp. 255-65.
2. See Ned B. Allen, "The Source of Othello" in Delaware
   Notes, 21st series, (1948), pp. 71-96 (where Chappuys'
   "Un More à Venise" is reprinted); and Max Bluestone,
   "Means of Imitation in Dramatic Adaptation of Prose
   Fiction: The Example of Othello", in Proceedings of the
   IVth Congress of the International Comparative
   Literature Association (Fribourg, 1964), ed. F. Jost,
   (Paris, 1966), pp. 855-67.
3. See E.A.J. Honigmann, "Othello, Chappuys and Cinthio",
   in Notes and Queries, (April 1966), pp. 136-7.

example of this occurs in M.R. Ridley's introduction to

the Arden edition of Othello:

> There are a few verbal parallels which may be
> taken to suggest an acquaintance with the
> original, but I do not think that they are very
> significant; and there is at least one verbal
> point which tells in the other direction.[1]

> This is the point [3.3.365-9] ...which seems to
> me to tell against any verbal debt by Shakespeare
> to Cinthio. Cinthio says mutolo, Shakespeare "a
> dog". If Shakespeare had been following Cinthio
> at all closely, one would, I think, have expected,
> at this forcible moment, a closer correspondence
> – unless indeed it can be shown that dogs were so
> commonly proverbial a symbol of dumbness that "a
> dog" is in effect a translation of mutolo.[2]

This is a very odd statement. For a start, Shakespeare was

not translating Cinthio as Ridley suggests. Then, there is

the fact that the alternative source does not make any

mention of a dog either. Chappuys' translation reads

"estre né muet", which is a literal translation of the

original Italian.[3] It is therefore hard to see how this

point can "tell in the other direction". Ridley's point

may show what Shakespeare did not do in relation to Cinthio,

but it in no way proves what Shakespeare did do in relation

to Chappuys.

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1. M.R. Ridley, Introduction to Arden edition of Othello,
   (London, 1968), pp. xv-xvi. All Othello quotations are
   from this edition.
2. M.R. Ridley, ibid, p. 241, n.2.
3. See Ned B. Allen, op. cit., p. 87.

The "few verbal parallels" between Shakespeare
and Cinthio mentioned by Ridley, stand as the only clues
to Shakespeare's use of Cinthio rather than Chappuys.[1]
These include Shakespeare's use of the following words:
"ocular" (3.3.336) from Cinthio's "occhi" (where Chappuys
has "me fais voir"); "acerb" (for "bitter", 1.3.350) from
Cinthio's "acerbissimo"; the repeated "you are mov'd"
(3.3.221-7) from Cinthio's "voi moue ad ira" (where
Chappuys has "vous incite"); "Desdemona" from "Disdemona"
(Chappuys "Disdemone"); and his unique use of "molestation"
(2.1.16) from Cinthio's "molestia" (Chappuys omits this
passage on the dangers of the sea). Max Bluestone[2] has
challenged the primacy of the Italian version over the
French by showing that Shakespeare could have derived
"acerb" and "ocular" from elsewhere. Bluestone's suggest-
ion is antithetical to the ideal of economy in criticism,
and his alternative transliterations from the French
version are not as convincing as those cited for the
Italian, since they concern words whose more general meanings

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1. E.A.J. Honigmann, op. cit., finds some verbal parallels
   with Chappuys, though he admits these "perhaps, amount
   to nothing more than coincidence" (p. 136).
2. Max Bluestone, op. cit., pp. 855-6, n.1. Bluestone
   suggests "danger", "lie with her", and "pierced" were
   transliterations from the French.

and greater frequency of use in written language make them
more likely to be coincidental parallels, and are therefore
less telling than those listed above as evidence for trans-
literation.

An examination of the French and Italian versions
reveals no significant difference in the imaginative
language used by the two writers. This is due to two facts:
Chappuys' translation, as H.B. Charlton observed, "follows
the original with a literal fidelity"[1]; and the original is
almost totally lacking in imaginative language. For the
sake of economy, I have decided to concentrate on the
Italian original which, according to the general concensus
of critical opinion, Shakespeare did use in the making of
Othello.

The second section of this chapter will concern
minor source areas which influenced the imagery in Othello.
The exotic imagery in the play seems to be borrowed from
classical works like Pliny's Natural History, but a recent
publication by Eldred Jones[2] suggests that an 'African
myth' was firmly established in Shakespeare's society and
owed its origins as much to contemporary works like
Hakluyt's Principal Navigations (1589) as to the works of

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1. H.B. Charlton, op. cit., pp. 114-5.
2. E. Jones, Othello's Countrymen, (Oxford, 1965).

the classical authors. Along with some observations on
Othello's ethnic background and the effect this has on the
imagery associated with him, the second section of this
chapter will consider Fenton's translation of Bandello's
Tragicall Discourses (1567) which has been recently
suggested as source material for Othello by Paul N. Siegel.[1]

Shakespeare and Cinthio

        The seventh novella of the third decade of
Cinthio's Hecatommithi tells the story of a "Moorish Captain"
who "takes to wife a Venetian Dame, and his Ancient accuses
her of adultery".[2] In writing Othello Shakespeare was
faced with the task of converting this short prosaic
narrative into a sustained poetic drama. The original of
Othello was only one of the hundred tales in Cinthio's
book, and there were nine other stories in the third decade
to illustrate the theme of "The Unfaithfulness of Husbands
and of Wives". The story of the Moorish Captain was the
barest outline of a gruesome tragedy whose point was to
show how an innocent wife's "unfaithfulness" could be

1. Paul N. Siegel, "A New Source for Othello?" in PMLA,
   Vol. 75, (1960), p. 480.
2. Cinthio quotations and translations are from the novella
   and J.E. Taylor's translation (1855) as printed by H.H.
   Furness in the New Variorum edition Othello, (New York,
   1886), reprinted 1963.

forged by a man with a wicked mind. It was intended to
complement the other stories devoted to the same theme by
warning husbands against a too extreme and hasty revenge
for suspicions not founded on fact. Cinthio had little
time or need to develop his characters: they remained
flat and lacked individuality beyond their respective
parts in the plot.

Similarly, Cinthio found little occasion for
development of his language. What imagery he did use was
largely conventional. For example, he described a soldier
who demonstrated "proud and valorous speech and...a
specious presence", as "another Hector or Achilles"[1]; and
when Disdemona is challenged by the Moor regarding the
handkerchief, her blushing is described as being "red as
fire".[2] The lack of imagery in Cinthio's narrative
emphasised the purpose behind the story. Cinthio did not
wish to divert his reader's attention from the stinging
blatancy of the plot nor from the ugly reality of his
characters' actions. He achieved a didactic forcefulness
through the sheer starkness of his prose.

In transforming his source material Shakespeare

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1. "sembianza un' Ettore, od un Achille", p. 378.
2. "viso tutta fuoco", p. 384.

freed the Othello-Desdemona conflict of the narrow
moralistic overtones Cinthio had used. He turned a simple
and sometimes incredible illustration of a husband's
ignorance into a major investigation of human frailty in
contact with love, deceit and jealousy. In so doing he
added a poetic richness which, far from distracting the
audience's attention, gives an insight into the mental
conflict of the protagonist and adds credibility to the
actions of each of the main characters.

Cinthio offered little that could be used in the
imagery of Othello, thus Shakespeare's debt to Cinthio in
this respect is minimal. Yet Shakespeare's reactions to
certain features of Cinthio's novella can be seen in the
imagery he used. It will be obvious from the discussion
following that the greater bulk of the play's imagery was
in no way influenced by Cinthio's work. In general Shak-
espeare's inspiration for the play's imagery came not from
his major source but from minor sources, or else from the
world around him, e.g. the theatre (see my previous discuss-
ion on Othello's 'theatre' imagery in the Introductory
Chapter, p. 35).

Maurianne S. Adams has published a most thorough
analysis of the best developed chain of iterated words and
phrases in Cinthio's novella.[1] She has shown that the

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1. Maurianne S. Adams, "'Ocular Proof' in Othello and its
   Sources", in PMLA, Vol. 79, (1964), pp. 234-41.

Italian author's repeated references to "eyes", "sight"
and "blindness", in conjunction with his iteration of the
terminology of justice, exercised a shaping influence on
Shakespeare's use of imagery associated with the theme
of "ocular proof" which runs through Othello. In her own
words, Miss Adams' study is concerned with

> how words and phrases such as vedere cogl'occhi,
> vendetta, satio, and la giustizia divina are
> translated imaginatively into the thematic
> imagery of ocular proof, the configuration of
> revenge, satisfaction, and satiation, and the
> movement from justice to mercy which Desdemona
> offers to Othello.[1]

Miss Adams traces the repetitions of the seeing
and eyesight references throughout Cinthio's tale and
observes that sight in the source remains primarily
concrete and material, with only the slightest attempt
made to give it spiritual significance. She says that

> Cinthio's faint attempt at a metaphor of vision
> rather than the literalness of eyesight dies
> a-borning. But Shakespeare seized what was
> potential in his source and translated it into a
> conflict among modes of vision and blindness.[2]

Othello's "I'll see before I doubt, when I doubt, prove"
(3.3.194) which soon becomes "give me the ocular proof"
(3.3.366), has grown from the seeds of suspicion planted

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1. Ibid., p. 234.
2. Ibid., p. 238.

by Iago: "discern'st thou aught in that?...Look to your

wife, observe her well with Cassio; /Wear your eye thus, not

jealous, nor secure...look to 't...perceive [Cassio] and his

means;/Note if your lady strain her entertainment...Much

will be seen in that" (3.3.103, 201-2, 204, 253-4, 356).

In a similar way the Moor in the source is driven to

demanding ocular proof from his cunning Ensign. "Make

thou these eyes self-witnesses of what thou tell'st"

cries the Moor[1] in response to the Ensign's suggestive

words: "I would not step 'twixt man and wife...but let

your eyes be witness to themselves...the lady Disdemona

hath, with a false show of love for you, blinded your eyes

to what you should have seen..."[2]

Shakespeare enlarged the sight pattern in his

play to link it with light/dark and "pageant" motifs.[3]

This complexity did not exist in Cinthio but the germ of

the pattern Shakespeare certainly borrowed from his major

source. Miss Adams comments on Shakespeare's method of

borrowing. The language pattern in the source, when trans-

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1. "vedere cogl'occhi quello, che detto mi hai", p. 381.
2. "Io non voglio...por mano tra marito, e moglie: ma,
   se terrete aperti gli occhi, voi stesso lo vi vedrete"
   ..."la Donna col mostrar di amarvi, vi hà così
   appannati gli occhi, che non habbiate veduto quel,
   che veder devevate...", pp. 380 and 381.
3. See R.B. Heilman, Magic in the Web, pp. 50-73.

formed by Shakespeare was deepened and enriched, being
given an added imaginative dimension:

> Shakespeare's mode is imaginative and symbolic,
> whereas Cinthio proceeds by repetition and
> emphasis in order to invest key words with
> quasi-figurative meaning.[1]

Shakespeare assimilated his source at this verbal level in
another case too. Cinthio's repeated use of the word
"parole" seems to lie behind Shakespeare's concern with
<u>speech</u> in <u>Othello</u>.

> Cinthio begins the <u>speech</u> pattern by placing
"parole" in contexts designed to associate words and speech
with deceptive appearances and a false feeling of security.
The first occurrence is in the second sentence of the
story: Disdemona and the Moor

> lived in such harmony and peace in Venice that
> no word ever passed between them that was not
> affectionate and kind.[2]

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1. <u>Op cit</u>. p. 238. Cinthio's <u>sight</u> references achieve a
   higher imaginative significance after Disdemona's death
   where the Moor discovers that she had meant more to him
   than his own eyes ("che gli occhi suoi") and seeing
   ("veggendosene") her lost, he becomes bereft of his
   reason, searching ("cercando") in every part of the
   house trying to find her. (See Miss Adams, p. 238,
   and Taylor's translation, p. 387).
2. "...vissero insieme di sì concorde volere, et in tanta
   tranquillità, mentre furono in Venetia, che mai tra
   loro non fù <u>non dirò cosa ma parola men</u>, che amorevole",
   p. 377.

Set at the beginning of a story which is to exemplify the theme of "Unfaithfulness of Husbands and of Wives", and following the "Argument", or description of the plot, which openly states that "il Capitano uccide la Moglie",[1] this passage is infused with a suspenseful irony centred around the notion of the single word being the smallest unit in the marriage relationship. Even at the most insignificant level there was harmony between husband and wife, but the context allows Cinthio to point out the ironic significance of this apparent insignificance. In the course of the story, harmony and peace at the level of the smallest unit of communication between two persons will be transformed into chaos and bloodshed at the most tragic level.

With the next occurrence of "parole", Cinthio begins to show how this transformation will be brought about. Here is his description of the Ensign, who corresponds to Shakespeare's Iago:

> Now amongst the soldiery there was an Ensign, a man of handsome figure, but of the most depraved nature in the world. This man was in great favour with the Moor, who had not the slightest idea of his wickedness: for,

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1. "The Captain [the Moor is a Captain in the source] kills the woman", p. 376.

despite the malice lurking in his heart, he
cloaked with proud and valorous speech
(coll'alte, e superbe parole) and with a
specious presence the villainy of his soul
with such art that he was to all outward show
another Hector or Achilles.[1]

One of the special features of the Ensign's wickedness is
his use of words to cover up truth. Here it is the truth
about himself that he disguises with speech, but his
wickedness and art remain a potential threat to all
truth.

The word "parole" appears at each point in the
story significant to the building up of the Moor's
suspicions: in the ironic description of married harmony;
the introduction of the villain; the first temptation of
the Moor by the villain; the Moor's taunting of Disdemona;
the second temptation by the villain; and the Captain of
the troop's[2] unfortunate visit to the Moor's house. In
the temptations of the Moor by the villain, "parole" is
used in three metaphors where words are given physical
substantiation: "his words left a sharp stinging thorn
in the Moor's heart"; "These words went straight to the
moor's heart..."; "And with these words they parted."

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1. P. 378.
2. Cassio's source counterpart.

The wretched Moor, struck to the heart as by a barbed dart.."[1] The substantiation of "parole" through imaginative use of language, demonstrates the way in which the Moor is being attacked. The Ensign uses words as weapons, understanding perfectly the mechanics of their functioning, and applying this knowledge to achieve deadly effectiveness. This substantiation process also parallels the way in which the Moor responds to the attack. Just as these metaphors lend physical substantiality to "words", so the Moor by exercising his imagination, lends substantiation (and therefore false meaning) to the Ensign's calculated words. The passage quoted above, rendered by Taylor as "[the Moor] began to guess the meaning of the Ensign's words" has lost much of its significance in this translation. Cinthio wrote "[il Moro] s'imagino che le parole, che gli havea detto l'Alfieri, gli havessero voluto significare". It is the active participation of the Moor's imagination which gives significance to the Ensign's cunningly wrought words.

After the Captain of the troop's unfortunate visit, the Moor needs only one more piece of evidence to

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1. "...tali parole, così pungente spina nell'animo del Moro", p. 380; "Queste parole passarono il cuore al Moro insino alle radici", p. 381; "Et con queste parole si disparti ono. Il misero Moro, come tocco da pungentissimo strale", p. 382.

make him swear to kill his wife. After securing Disdemona's
handkerchief the Ensign begins to perform his final trick.
The eavesdropping situation is a dramatisation of the
process that the word "parole" has been subjected to. The
Moor is positioned so that he can "see and hear" the Ensign
and the Captain of the troop as they converse, but while
he can "hear" the words, he does not know what is being
said: "and whilst talking to the Captain of every other
subject than of Disdemona"[1], the Ensign achieves precisely
the result he is aiming for. In the positioning of the
Moor, and in the manipulation of the conversation, the
Ensign dramatises the gap between word and meaning which
he had so artfully utilised at a purely linguistic level
previously. The Moor is seduced into supplying the imag-
inative link which allows him to accept the Ensign's
description of the conversation:

> He has hidden from me nothing [the Ensign
> explains], and has told me that he has been
> used to visit your wife whenever you went from
> home, and that on the last occasion she gave
> him [that] handkerchief which you presented to
> her when you married her.[2]

1. "Et parlandogli di ogn'altra cose, che della Donna",
   p. 383.
2. P. 383.

Shakespeare's use of figurative language associated with "speech" in <u>Othello</u> has traceable links with Cinthio's use of the "parole" pattern in the source. Othello is faced with basically the same problem as his source counterpart in that he is confronted with a villain who understands perfectly the potential deceitfulness of words and can use them with deadly skill. However, Shakespeare makes the villain's success in his attack more credible than did Cinthio by evincing Othello's vulnerability to such attack. Early in the play Othello admits that he is "rude" or unsophisticated in his speech (1.3.81), although the eloquence of his very statement generates some sense of paradox.[1] He is a foreigner in a country whose customs and people he doesn't fully understand. He is sensitive to the fact that the Venetian

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1. In "Shakespeare's Imagery: The Diabolic Images in <u>Othello</u>", (<u>Shakespeare Survey</u>, Vol. 5, (1952), pp. 64-80), S.L. Bethell discusses the contradiction between the Moor's description of his language as crudely unpolished and the lofty, poetic language we actually hear. Bethell suggests that this contradiction is catered for by the audience's suspension of disbelief — that in poetic drama the hero cannot be expected to speak in anything but the finest poetry, no matter what kind of speech that poetry may be meant to represent. A further explanation may be that Othello refers to the military and African flavours in his speech (e.g. in 1.3.128ff.) He fears that the roughness of a military man's tropes or the exotic nature of a foreigner's allusions will be considered unacceptable in the Venetian high society.

society is more sophisticated than any society he has
previously lived in, and he knows that competance in
speech is one of the criteria for full membership of
this society.[1] This knowledge is particularly haunting
because he fears the Venetians might interpret his
"rudeness" of speech as brutish stupidity.

>   Haply, for I am black,
>   And have not those soft parts of conversation
>   That chamberers have...   (3.3.267-9)

Thus he talks himself into the hands of his enemy.[2]

The precise nature of Othello's vulnerability
is stated negatively by Brabantio:

>   But words are words; I never yet did hear
>   That the bruis'd heart was pierced through
>   the ear.   (1.3.218-9)

Shakespeare borrowed this figure from Cinthio's two
metaphors: "his words left a sharp stinging thorn in the

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1. Cf. 2.3.109 where the drunken Cassio, attempting to
   prove his respectability, claims he "can stand well
   enough and speak well enough".
2. Cf. 4.2.48-51: "Had it pleas'd heaven / To try me
   with affliction, had they ... Steep'd me in poverty
   to the very lips...". The lips were a vulnerable
   area for Othello. The first metaphor used in the
   play to describe him is Roderigo's "the thicklips"
   (1.1.66), which at once conjures notions of sensual-
   ity and of incompetance in speech. On a number of
   occasions Iago torments Othello with descriptions of
   Cassio's and Desdemona's lips meeting (3.3.428-30;
   4.1.2; 4.1.71; 3.3.347).

Moor's heart", and "with these words they parted. The wretched Moor struck to the heart as by a barbed dart".[1] Brabantio says that words are only words, they are not substantial things which can harm people. On the other hand, actions are substantial, and Brabantio's heart has just been bruised by his daughter's actions in eloping with Othello. However, the old man takes some consolation in the fact that the Duke's words, which have just ruled in favour of Othello and Desdemona, are only words and won't increase the hurt he has suffered already.

But the case is different with Othello. For him words are not just words, as Brabantio would have them; they are always bound up with actions whose real meanings cannot be discovered even though the words are supposed to signal those meanings. Othello won Desdemona's love with the words of his life story, and wooed her with speeches about his battle actions. Desdemona says:

> I saw Othello's visage in his mind,
> And to his honours, and his valiant parts
> Did I my soul and fortunes consecrate.
> (1.3.252-4)

The actions come secondhand to Desdemona, through the medium of Othello's words, but in spite of this, she

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1. P. 380 and p. 382.

sees through the words to the true worth of the actions: she ekes out their true meaning. This is what Othello cannot do. He needs words in order to interpret actions, but he cannot bring to bear sufficient critical analysis to judge dispassionately whether or not the words give to the actions their proper meanings.[1] His natural bent is to create a meaningful link between word and action out of his own imagination. As Cassio talks to Iago of Bianca in the eavesdropping scene, Othello hastily interprets, and supplies Desdemona's words:

> Crying "O dear Cassio!" as it were: his gesture
> imports it.   (4.1.135-6)

But when he cannot make a meaningful link between action and word he becomes enraged. After Montano and the drunken Cassio have had their skirmish, Othello asks the men to explain the situation. He cannot get a straight answer, and immediately his blood begins his "safer guides to rule" (2.3.196).

Later, succumbing to the artful speech of Iago, Othello broods over the words the Ancient has used:

> Lie with her, lie on her? - We say lie on her,
> when they belie her, - lie with her, zounds,
> that's fulsome!   (4.1.35-6)

1. See for example 3.3.136-7, and 3.3.123, 3.3.166,
   5.1.28.

Othello can escape the vision of Cassio and Desdemona lying in bed together when "lie on her" is used, because "to lie on" has an alternative meaning in "to belie". But the vision is inescapable when "lie with her" is used. Othello says "It is not words that shake me thus" (4.1.41) and he is right to a certain extent since he believes he trembles at real actions. But what he actually trembles at is the false substantiation his interpreting imagination gives to Iago's words. Othello was the ideal victim for Iago's villainy.

Like Cinthio's Ensign, Iago uses words as weapons not only to shield his own true nature and intentions, but also to destroy his chosen victims. "I'll pour this pestilence into his ear", says Iago (2.3.347), referring to the words with which he will ply Othello to trap the Moor into misinterpreting his wife's pleas for Cassio's reinstatement. Iago administers his artful words as if they were a poisonous substance.[1] He knows how to

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1. Cf. 3.3.330-1, where Iago uses the poison image again, this time in conjunction with the word "conceit" which sometimes meant "a trick with speech" in Shakespeare's day. It is noticeable that Iago applies the poisoning function of words (2.3.347) with the same purposefulness and success that he achieves in applying wine to Cassio in Act 2, scene 3. For a discussion of the purposeful quality in Iago's imagery see W.H. Clemen, The Development of Shakespeare's Imagery, (London, 1951), p. 129.

turn a phrase so that it will strike the sensitive spots
in the Moor's mind, and he knows the right mixture of
speech and hesitation that will draw forth the required
response in the overactive and unguarded mind of the Moor.
He also knows what aspects of Othello's relationship with
Desdemona to play upon most advantageously, and he knows
how to express his arguments for maximum effect on the
Moor's imagination.

Iago has an impressive repetoire of language
tricks. There is his hesitancy, calculated to increase
Othello's belief in his honesty and loving friendship
(e.g. 3.3.94-128).[1] There is his insidious voicing of a
statement in the negative, by which the victim is pre-
sented with the undesirable alternative that leads away
from the truth (e.g. 3.3.222-7). The Moor declares open
season on himself by asking Iago: "Show me thy thought",
and then believing with tragic faith that the words he
receives are a truthful expression of the villain's real
thinking.

1. Cf. 3.3.124. Othello is alert to the "stops" which
   "in a false disloyal knave Are tricks of custom",
   but he is not wise to who the false disloyal knave
   is.

Iago's other trick is in the imaginative language he uses. His influence on Othello in this respect, especially in the case of the Moor's inheritance of vicious and bestial imagery from Iago, has been observed by a number of critics.[1] Elsewhere, Iago employs figurative language in pointed and influential ways. In explaining the disturbances on Othello's wedding night, Iago says, referring to Montano and Cassio:

> ...friends all but now, even now,
> In quarter, and in terms, <u>like bride and groom</u>,
> <u>Devesting them to bed</u>, and then but now
> As if some planet had unwitted men,
> Swords out, and tilting on at other's breast,
> In opposition bloody.   (2.3.170-5)

Insinuating the image of married concord rapidly dissolved to chaos into Othello's mind at this point is a masterstroke by Iago. The villain is softening his victim up in preparation for later attacks aimed at the Moor's pictorial imagination.[2]

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1. These include M.M. Morozov, "The Individualization of Shakespeare's Characters through Imagery", <u>Shakespeare Survey</u>, Vol. 2, (1949), pp. 84-9; W.H. Clemen, <u>op. cit</u>., pp. 131-2; and G. Wilson Knight, <u>The Wheel of Fire</u>, (London, 1969), pp. 112-8. S.L. Bethell, in "Shakespeare's Imagery: The Diabolic Images in <u>Othello</u>" <u>op. cit</u>. pp. 64-80, studies the influence of Iago's diabolical imagery on Othello's language.
2. Cf. 3.3.401-2; 3.3.425ff.

Only too late is Iago's villainous use of words discovered by Othello. Yet, Iago's tactics could have been revealed earlier except that the Ancient extricated himself from the threatening situation with characteristic success:

> Iago. Will you hear me, Roderigo?
> Rod. Faith, I have heard too much, for your
>   words and performance are no kin together.
> Iago. You charge me most unjustly.
> Rod. With nought but truth.   (4.2.183-7)

The truth is dangerous to Iago. At all costs he must quell Roderigo's intention to make himself known to Desdemona. As Iago stabs him, Roderigo cries "O damn'd Iago, O inhuman dog" (5.1.62), which echoes Othello's words to Iago "Thou hadst been better have been born a dog" (3.3.368), and prepares for Lodovico's "O Spartan dog" at the end of the play. In these references Shakespeare seems to be linking the notions of being a dog and being able to speak. Where Cinthio's Moor wished the villain "nato mutolo" (born dumb)[1] Shakespeare wrote "born a dog". The Italian word "mutolo" could have suggested a hunting dog to Shakespeare since an Elizabethan meaning of the English word "mute" was "a pack of hounds", or "the cry of hounds

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1. P. 381.

working"[1] This association could have been facilitated

by an Elizabethan notion about the important difference

between man and animals. The notion is contained in a

passage in Thomas Wilson's Arte of Rhetorique (1553), a

text-book for orators which Shakespeare probably knew.

Wilson wrote:

> Where as menne are in manye thynges weake by
> Nature and subiecte to much infirmitye: ...
> in this one point they passe all other Creatures
> liuynge, that they have the gift of speache...[2]

Shakespeare gives Othello this Elizabethan understanding -

that one of the major differences between man and dog is

the former's divine gift of speech. What Othello cannot

conceive of, and tragically so, is a man who combines the

faculty of speech with the dog-like qualities of cunning,

savageness, and heightened instinct for preying on other

creatures, even those more noble than himself. Lodovico's

description of Iago as a "Spartan dog" has been thought

1. See SOED "Mute" sb. 3. The "hunting dog"/"speech" link
   recurs in the Iago-Roderigo dialogues. Roderigo
   describes himself as "not...a hound that hunts but one
   that fills up the cry" (2.3.354-5), referring to his
   unsuccessful overtures to Desdemona; and Iago refers to
   the words with which he incites Roderigo as "the putting
   on" of a dog previously weighted down to prevent "his
   quick hunting" (2.1.298-9).
2. T. Wilson, The Arte of Rhetorique (1553), facsimile,
   (1962), p. 11.

to refer to "the determined silence of Iago (5.2.305),
and to the proverbial silence of the Spartans under
suffering, as well as to the savageness of the dogs".[1]
In the light of the other "hunting dog"/"speech" links in
the play, it seems reasonable to suggest that "Spartan
dog" has a different meaning, concerned with sound rather
than silence - an idea which Shakespeare had used pre-
viously in A Midsummer Night's Dream. Theseus described
his hunting dogs thus:

> My hounds are bred out of the Spartan kind...
> Slow in pursuit, but matched in mouth like bells,
> Each under each. A cry more tunable
> Was never holloed to, nor cheered with horn,
> In Crete, in Sparta, nor in Thessaly.
> Judge when you hear.   (4.1.122-30)

Spartan dog that he is, Iago's speech is a rare and fatal
mixture of seemingly concordant sounds and brutal dis-
cordant intent. Theseus' dogs have lost their quickness
of pursuit in the perfection of their vocal chords, but
Iago has perfected the hunting dog's instinct for prey
without detriment to his human abilities with speech.

Iago's end is not death. More appropriately it
is speechlessness: "From this time forth I never will
speak word" (5.2.305). The power of the villain has been
as effectively cut off as if he had been killed. The whole

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1. Singer, quoted by Furness, p. 333.

action of the play has been caused by his words. Reduced now from the superpowerful half-man half-dog to the speechless dog he should have been born, Iago's influence can proceed no further, and the play is due to finish.

Shakespeare's <u>speech</u> imagery probably had its germ in the "paroles" metaphors of Cinthio's tale, but Shakespeare's pattern is developed and extended far beyond the source's brief figures. Shakespeare links the speech imagery with the dominating animal imagery in the play, and uses the concept of speech to illustrate both the vulnerability of the protagonist and the power of the antagonist.

Further parallels exist between the small amount of imagery in Cinthio's narrative and the poetry of Shakespeare's play. Both writers use the sea as an atmospheric image. Cinthio gives the Moor and Disdemona "a perfectly tranquil sea"[1] for their voyage to Cyprus. At this stage in the narrative no disruptive force has yet been introduced. The atmosphere surrounding the marriage of the Moor is one of harmony and serenity. All is well - but not for long. This atmosphere is polluted in the very next paragraph with the introduction of the wicked

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1. P. 378: "somma tranquillità del Mare".

Ensign. Shakespeare also uses the sea as an atmospheric image, but in <u>Othello</u> it is ambiguous. It disperses the threatening Turkish fleet, but it also threatens to part Desdemona and Othello.[1] The notable difference in Cinthio's and Shakespeare's uses of the sea motif is that in the latter the main force of evil, Iago, has already been introduced into the play-world. Before the sailing to Cyprus the audience finds out that Iago hates the Moor and intends, with the help of hellish and dark forces, to bring a monstrous plan to fruition (1.3.401-2). The forces of chaos are already let loose in the play, and the "high and monstrous main" reflects this (2.1.13).

Another link between the two works shows that Shakespeare borrowed Cinthio's attitude towards Disdemona and expressed it in the imagery of his play. Cinthio's characters are not individualized through any systematic use of imagery, but his Disdemona is quite specifically portrayed in two contrasting ways. First, she is regularly associated with the domestic scene. She most often enters the narrative at dinner time, conversing with her husband during or just after meals. She only leaves the house to visit the Ensign's wife, and there she is depicted

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1. Act 2, scene 1.

nursing a young child, all the while unwise to the man-
oeuvres of the Ensign who extracts the handkerchief from
her sash. M.M. Morozov has observed the domestic nature
of the imagery surrounding Desdemona. He also points out
the contrast this makes with the militant-heroic note in
imagery associated with her.[1] This contrast existed in Cin-
thio's heroine too. The other side of Disdemona's
personality is revealed in her speeches. She prefers to
"share the dangers" rather than "bide in safety", and she
says to the Moor: "'I will accompany you witherso'er you
go, were it to pass through fire'".[2] Although generally her
nature is placid, she unhesitatingly attacks her husband
for his angry outbursts: "'you Moors are of so hot a
nature that every little trifle moves you to anger and
revenge'".[3] Through setting and dialogue Cinthio depicted
the two contrasting sides of his heroine's personality.

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1. See "The Individualization of Shakespeare's Characters
   Through Imagery", in Shakespeare Survey, Vol. 2 (1949),
   pp. 89-90. Morozov follows G. Wilson Knight who noted
   this aspect of Desdemona's language in The Wheel of
   Fire (London, 1969), pp. 107-9.
2. P. 378: "'...voglio io venire con voi, ovunque
   anderete, Se bene così devessi passare in camiscia
   per lo fuoco'".
3. P. 380: "'voi Mori sete di natura tanto caldi, ch'ogni
   poco di cosa vi muove ad ira, et a vendetta'".

Shakespeare gives Desdemona these same characteristics - an innocent homeliness together with a vigorous militancy. One of his means of individualization is through the imagery associated with Desdemona.[1]

From Cinthio Shakespeare may have also taken the germinal notion for imagery used by Iago. Cinthio told of ideas "nato nell'animo" (p. 381) - born in the mind - and the bringing to fruition of Iago's planning is described as a "monstrous birth" (1.3.402). Iago obliquely invokes the offspring-of-the-mind notion once again at 2.1.127: "my Muse labours, And thus she is deliver'd".[2]

Further minor parallels may be cited. Not surprisingly both writers show the Moor railing against his wife with the conventional image of the cuckold's horns[3]

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1. See for example 1.3.256; 3.3.24; 3.3.58-9; 3.3.78.
2. Max Bluestone, ("Means of Dramatic Adaptation of Prose Fiction: The Example of Othello" in Proceedings of the IVth Congress of the International Comparative Literature Association (Fribourg, 1964), ed. F. Jost, Paris, 1966), pp. 855-67), working with the French version of the source story, links Chappuys' use of "embusches" with the entrapping imagery (nets, webs, snares, birdlime, etc.) used by Iago. See also Ned B. Allen, "Othello and Cinthio: A Neglected Head-Link", Notes and Queries, (April, 1961), pp. 138-9. This is the only extra contribution (and not a very convincing one) that the French version could have made to the imagery of Othello.
3. Cf. p. 387, "corna in capo", and 4.1.62, "horned man".

and, finally, Shakespeare's reference to "jealousy...
the green ey'd monster" (3.3.169-70) may owe something
to Cinthio's "bestial gelosia" (p. 338).

While Shakespeare seems to echo Cinthio's
novella in minor aspects of Othello's imagery, the source
work gave no hints for the great image patterns Shakes-
peare worked into his play. Neither Othello's lofty nor
Iago's loathsome imagery appeared in Cinthio. The
animals and devils which creep and slide through the
play did not exist in the source, nor did Cinthio anti-
cipate Shakespeare's images associated with war, money,
or light and dark. Furthermore, Cinthio did not capital-
ise on the Moor's exotic racial origins, as Shakespeare
did. The brilliance of the transformation Shakespeare
wrought upon Cinthio's prosaic tale was achieved to a
large extent through the addition of an imaginative
dimension in the language. However, in spite of the
poetic aridity of Cinthio's narrative, some features of
his work - especially in the case of the sight pattern -
are discernible in minor aspects of Othello's imagery.

Imagery in "Othello": The Strong Influence of Minor Source Areas

Paul N. Siegel and William E. McCarron have
recently proposed that Fenton's translation of Bandello's

<u>Tragicall Discourses</u> (1567) influenced the writing of
<u>Othello</u>.[1] They argue convincingly, taking into account
plot incidents, character portrayal and language use.
In the two latter areas there are similarities between
Shakespeare and Fenton which are not to be found in
Cinthio. In addition, McCarron finds analogues for the
names of Bianca, Cassio and Roderigo in two of the other
tales which make up Fenton's collection. Scholarship has
otherwise been unable to find analogues for these three
names.

Briefly, here are the points of resemblance
between <u>Othello</u> and "Discourse IV" of Fenton's book as
pointed out by Siegel and McCarron. There is a broad
similarity in plot: both stories (and Cinthio's too, of
course) concern a military commander of foreign birth
who slays his wife out of jealousy. In the area of
characterisation, there is a striking similarity in the
treatments of the two innocent heroines. Both suffer
extreme humiliation at the hands of their husbands, but
remain steadfast and patient in their wifely love and
obedience, thus enraging their jealous husbands even

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1. Paul N. Siegel, "A New Source for <u>Othello</u>?" in <u>PMLA</u>,
   Vol. 75, (1960), p. 480, and William E. McCarron
   "<u>Othello</u> and Fenton: An Addendum" in <u>Notes and Queries</u>
   (April, 1966), pp. 137-8.

more.[1] The two works also display parallel incidents.

In both, the husband kisses his wife before killing her,

and refuses her the time to pray before her death. The

dramatist was probably reminded of the Fenton story through

its broad plot parallel with Cinthio's novella, but the

incident and character similarities mentioned by Siegel

and McCarron do not occur between <u>Othello</u> and its main

source, so Fenton's story has a claim to being likely

source material for Shakespeare's play on all three grounds

of plot, incident and character similarities.

Shakespeare did not only incorporate character

and incident elements from Fenton into his play: the

imagery in Fenton's translation seems to have impressed

Shakespeare too. William E. McCarron gives one example

of parallel imagery.[2] Where Fenton (and not Belleforest,

whose translation of Bandello Fenton used) says that the

dying Albanian Captain "commended his carcasse to the

greedy jaws of ravenous wolves", Shakespeare parallels

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1. Cinthio's heroine, while yet commanding our sympathy,
   does not show the Griselda-like patience of Shakes-
   peare's and Fenton's heroines. Disdemona is a weaker
   heroine: she weeps continuously and expressed shallow-
   minded fears of being, to her society, an example of
   the forsaken wife.
2. W.E. McCarron, <u>op. cit.</u>, p. 137.

with Othello's

> hurl my soul from heaven,
> And fiends will snatch at it.   (5.2.275-6)

This is not the only similarity in imaginative language.
"Discourse IV" of Fenton's Bandello translation showed a
sustained richness and elegance of imagery to be found
nowhere in the versions of Cinthio's story available to
Shakespeare. Much of this imagery was used to individual-
ize character and to comment on the nature of the personal
relationships in the story. Shakespeare realised that
to turn Cinthio's story into a drama the characters and
the personal conflicts had to be more emphatically
delineated and drawn into focus. This the dramatist
did by the addition of an imaginative texture in the
language, parts of which he appears to have borrowed
from Fenton's translation.

A noticeable correlation in the imagery used
by Shakespeare and Fenton occurs in their treatments
of the love theme. The relationship between the
"Albanoyse Captaine" and his lady, like that between
Othello and Desdemona, is described metaphorically in
terms associated with war. The "Albanoyse" says of

the woman he loves:

> the glymerynge glances of <u>her twinklynge eyes</u>
> <u>...hath made my hart more assaltable and apte</u>
> <u>to admitt parley</u>, then eyther the noyse of the
> canon or terrour of the enemye...[1]

This compares with the description of Desdemona at 2.3.21
-2:

> <u>What an eye she has!</u> methinks it sounds a parley
> of provocation.

An extended metaphor in Fenton compares the captain's
ability in wooing the lady with his prowess as a war tact-
ician (pp. 169-70), which is reminiscent of the terms in
which Othello courts Desdemona (1.3.132-68), as again is
Fenton's reference to the "letters, dyttyes, presents of
great price, and a thousande other vayne importunityes
whych <u>love</u> dothe ymagine to animate <u>his soldiours</u>" (p. 169)
(cf. 3.4.149).

The similarities in the two heroines' behaviour
has already been mentioned, but the language used to
describe them is also remarkably similar. The whiteness
and tenderness of their bodies is stressed, so too is the
sovereignty and gentleness of their natures. Fenton's
lady was the "<u>image of the worlde</u> for beautye" (p. 167),
a beauty which "ought to serve but for the <u>dyet of the</u>
<u>gods</u>", while the play heroine is compared with "<u>another</u>

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1. P. 171. All references to the Tudor Translations edition
   of <u>Certain Tragical Discourses of Bandello</u> translated
   into English by Geffraie Fenton Anno 1567, introduced
   by R.L. Douglas (London, 1898).

world" made of "one entire and perfect chrysolite" (5.2.145-6) and her beauty causes her to be considered "sport for Jove" (2.3.16-17).

The language used to describe Othello's behaviour also has links with Fenton's description of the "Albanoyse Captaine". Each hero suffers by "yeldinge rashelye to the resolution and sentence of his owne conceites, [and] thinks his wife as light of the seare and apt to deceive him as he is readie to admit synister suspicion" (p. 178).[1] They both involve themselves with "visions and hollowe dreames" (p. 182) of their wives' unfaithfulness, as well as having "fyttes of straunge and diverse disposition" (p. 186).[2] In Fenton there is considerable discussion about suicide, focusing on its "beastly" aspects (p. 184),[3] and there is also a description of the proverbial "she ape" lolling her whelp in her arms "in such rude sorte" that she "smothereth it to death, killing by this meanes with overmuch love the thing which yet wold live if it were not for th' excesse of her affection" (p. 176). Scholars have often wondered why Shakespeare replaced Cinthio's form of the murder with the death by smothering. Fenton's description of

1. Cf. 3.3.331.
2. Cf. 4.1.51 and 3.4.130.
3. Cf. 5.2.356-7.

the she ape has obviously appropriate links with Shakes-
peare's Othello: "one that lov'd not wisely, but too
well" (5.2.345).

The richness of Fenton's imaginative language
has already been alluded to. The nature and qualities
of this richness find parallels in Othello's imagery.
For example, in the following passage taken from Fenton's
description of the murder of the heroine by her jealous
husband, there is that same mixture of exotic, exalted,
monstrous and diabolic imagery which typifies the
language of Othello:

> ...her tyrannous husband; who, disclayming
> even nowe his former state and condition of a
> man, retires into th'abite of a monster, and
> cruell enemye to nature; and in convertinge
> the vertue of his former love, and remembrance
> of the sondrie pleasures he has heretofore
> receyved of his deare and lovynge wife, into
> present rage and unnaturall furye (far
> excedinge the savage and brutishe maner of
> the tiger, lyon, or libarde, bredd in the
> desertes of Affrike, the common norsse of
> monsters and creatures cruell without reason)
> whettynge his teeth for the terrible
> suggestion of the devill, who at th' instante put
> into his hand the dagger; wherewith, after he
> has embraced and kissed her, in such sorte as
> Judas kissed our Lorde the same night he
> betraied him, he saluted her with ten or xii
> estockados...   (pp. 188-9)

In Fenton's story of the "Albanoyse Captaine" Shakespeare
would have found that necessary element so entirely missing
from his major source: the poetic imagery which both

intensified the experience produced by the storyline and expanded its significance.

For Othello's exotic imagery Shakespeare could have also turned to the classical writers. His most likely source, critics agree, was Holland's translation of Pliny's Naturall History (1601), though details of the men whose heads grew beneath their shoulders, the anthropophagi, and such like, were available in various travel writers' works (e.g. Mandeville, Raleigh and Richard Eden's additions (1555) to John Lok's account of his Guinea voyages). Kenneth Muir[1] has shown that in Holland's Pliny Shakespeare could have found sources for Othello's allusions to the Pontic Sea, the Arabian trees, a statue made of chrysolite, as well as the anthropophagi and the headless men with faces on their chests. In addition, Muir finds in the same source the coloquintida, mandragora and mines of sulphur employed in Iago's imagery. While Holland seems a most likely source for Shakespeare's knowledge of such exotica, a number of scholars consider these notions had a currency in Shakes-

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1. In Shakespeare's Sources, Vol. 1, p. 128, and in Notes and Queries, (1953), pp. 513-4. See also his "Shakespeare's Use of Pliny Reconsidered", in Modern Language Review, Vol. 54, (1959), pp. 224-5.

peare's day which makes idle any attempt to determine Shakespeare's primary indebtedness.[1]

Eldred Jones has made a study of the Elizabethan theatre's attitude towards Africa and its people. He has shown how an "African myth" was established in Shakespeare's society, having derived from sources in Scriptural and Classical writings and in contemporary hearsay. This myth was particularly concerned with the wonders and strangeness of the hot, wild continent, and with the peculiarities of its inhabitants. The more incredible details about African life fired the Elizabethan and Jacobean imaginat- ions, and the role of the continent in the imaginative literature of England, especially in the drama, was significant. When Othello first stepped onto the stage he took his place in a well-developed theatrical tradition of the African character as the Elizabethans conceived it. Needless to say, the noble and ultimately tragic figure of Othello did not fit very well into the stereotype of the black African which dated back through Eleazer, the villain-

1. See for example M.R. Ridley, Othello, (Arden edition), Note, p. 29, and the suggestions in E. Jones' book, Othello's Countrymen, (London, 1965), passim.

hero of <u>Lust's Dominion</u> (1599), and Shakespeare's own Aaron, to Peele's bombastic and cruel Muly Hamet in <u>The Battle of Alcazar</u> (1588).

Another aspect of the theatre grew up alongside the portrayals of the African character. This was the use of African imagery. As a source of images Africa's influence was quite astounding. Most Elizabethan dramatists at some time or other referred to the gold or the horses of Barbary, to the tears of the crocodile, the monsters of Africa, or merely used the terms Moor, Negro or Ethiop[1] to denote blackness, cruelty, devilism, dishonesty, jealousy, or lustfulness, qualities commonly credited to Africans.[2]

Shakespeare's use of African imagery in <u>Othello</u> was more conventional than was his treatment of the African character. The play's imagery records the Barbary horse, the crocodile's tears, and the African monsters both cruel and wondrous. Through imagery Shakespeare points out the traditional association of the black man with the devil

1. Confusion over the various parts of Africa and the different races inhabiting them was widespread in Shakespeare's time.
2. See E. Jones, <u>op. cit.</u>, <u>passim</u> and especially Chapter 5: "Africa and the Language of the Plays".

and with un-Christian practices such as witchcraft. The
opposition between light and dark which is carried through-
out the play owes much to the extreme contrast existing
between the Elizabethan standards of physical beauty and
the African pigmentation. The images of heat and fire
illustrating Othello's rashness and passion derive from
the popular belief in the climate-oriented personality
and the well-known accounts of the sun-burned continent.

Miss Spurgeon[1] suggested that Shakespeare's
knowledge of the sea might well have been gained from books
such as Hakluyt's Principal Navigations (1589; enlarged
edition, 1600). Not only the sea, which figures strongly
in the imagery of Othello, but also contemporary aspects
of England's relations with the African continent would
have been brought closer to Shakespeare by Hakluyt's
writings.[2] Piracy, shipwrecks, storms and becalmings
were Hakluyt's stock in trade, and the imagery of Othello
concerns itself with all these. The incidents related
by Hakluyt and writers like him (Thomas Windham, John Lok,

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1. Shakespeare's Imagery, p. 48. Her discussion of the
   sea imagery in Othello is at pp. 337-8.
2. The actions, settings and imagery of Thomas Heywood's
   plays are known to have drawn upon Hakluyt's real-
   life stories of high adventure around the African
   coast.

Sir John Hawkins) became popular knowledge among
Elizabethans, and the theatre exploited these adventures,
disasters and lucky escapes to the full. Another aspect
of England's interest in Africa concerned the practice
of slave-trading, which was in its formative stages during
Shakespeare's life-time. There may be a link between
this and the regularly used slavery images in Othello.[1]
Popular knowledge concerning the African lands, seas and
peoples appears to have been influential on the imagery
in Othello. In Elizabethan notions about Africa,
Shakespeare, like many of his contemporaries, found a
rich source area for imagery.[2]

Along with the language of the theatre (whose
incluence I have discussed previously), the areas
examined here seem to have been largely responsible for

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1. The slavery images have been studied by K. Muir in
   "Freedom and Slavery in Othello", Notes and Queries
   (January, 1954), pp. 20-1, and R.B. Heilman in Magic
   in the Web, pp. 111-3. For excerpts from sixteenth-
   century accounts of African voyages dealing with the
   practice of slave-trading see E. Jones, op. cit.,
   pp. 12ff.
2. Eldred Jones' fascinating study reveals the breadth
   of the African influence upon the imagery of
   Elizabethan dramatists. For his discussion of the
   African imagery in Othello see pp. 86-109; 126-31.

CHAPTER FIVE

the type and quality of _Othello_'s imagery. Because of its prosaic nature the major source work exerted only a small influence on the play's imagery while minor source areas provided a much stronger influence.

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1. I.e. _The True Chronicle History of King Leir_ (1605), Sir Philip Sidney's _Arcadia_ (1590), Edmund Spenser's _Faerie Queene_ (1596), Raphael Holinshed's _Chronicles_ (1587), John Higgins' poem about "Cordila" in _The Mirror for Magistrates_ (1574), and Samuel Harsnett's _Declaration of Egregious Popishe Impostures_ (1603). For general discussion of the sources of _King Lear_ see K. Muir, _Shakespeare's Sources_, (London, 1957), pp. 141-66, and his Introduction to the Arden edition of _King Lear_, (London, 1968), pp. xxvi-xliii. See also W.W. Greg, "The Date of _King Lear_ and Shakespeare's Use of Earlier Versions of the Story", in _The Library_, n.s. Vol. 20, No. 4, (March, 1940), pp. 378-97; R.H. Perkinson, "Shakespeare's Revision of the Lear Story and the Structure of _King Lear_", in _Philological Quarterly_, Vol. 22, (1943), pp. 315-29; I. Ribner, "Shakespeare and Legendary History: _Lear_ and _Cymbeline_", in _Shakespeare Quarterly_, Vol. 7, (1956), pp. 47ff.; G.B. Harrison and R.F. McDonnell, _"King Lear": Text, Sources and Criticism_, (New York, 1962); and H. Craig, "When Shakespeare Altered his Sources", in _Centennial Review_, Vol. 8, (1964), pp. 121-8. Discussion relating to the individual sources includes R.A. Law, "_King Leir_ and _King Lear_: An Examination of the Two Plays", in _Studies in Honour of T.W. Baldwin_, (Illinois, 1958), pp. 112-24, and his "Holinshed's Lear Story and Shakespeare's", in _Studies in Philology_, Vol. 47, (1950), pp. ..., and I. Ribner, "Sidney's _Arcadia_ and the ... of _King Lear_", in _Shakespeare Newsletter_ ...

CHAPTER FIVE

KING LEAR

An old-fashioned chronicle play, a pastoral
romance, an epic poem, a history book, a popular narrative
poem and a common pamphlet – this is the unlikely collect-
ion of works recognised as the main material used by
Shakespeare in the writing of King Lear.[1] Though his
sources were diverse in nature, Shakespeare saw that each
had – to a greater or lesser degree – something to contrib-
ute to the final form of his tragedy. In the combining

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1. I.e. The True Chronicle History of King Leir (1605),
   Sir Philip Sidney's Arcadia (1590), Edmund Spenser's
   Faerie Queene (1596), Raphael Holinshed's Chronicles
   (1587), John Higgins' poem about "Cordila" in The
   Mirror for Magistrates (1574), and Samuel Harsnett's
   Declaration of Egregious Popishe Impostures (1603).
   For general discussion of the sources of King Lear
   see K. Muir, Shakespeare's Sources, (London, 1957),
   pp. 141-66, and his Introduction to the Arden edition
   of King Lear, (London, 1968), pp. xxvi-xliii. See
   also W.W. Greg, "The Date of King Lear and Shakes-
   peare's Use of Earlier Versions of the Story", in
   The Library, n.s. Vol. 20, No. 4, (March, 1940), pp.
   378-97; R.H. Perkinson, "Shakespeare's Revision of
   the Lear Story and the Structure of King Lear", in
   Philological Quarterly, Vol. 22, (1943), pp. 315-29;
   I. Ribner, "Shakespeare and Legendary History: Lear
   and Cymbeline", in Shakespeare Quarterly, Vol. 7,
   (1956), pp. 47ff.; G.B. Harrison and R.F. McDonnell,
   "King Lear": Text, Sources and Criticism, (New York,
   1962); and H. Craig, "When Shakespeare Altered his
   Sources", in Centennial Review, Vol. 8, (1964), pp.
   121-8. Discussion relating to the individual sources
   includes R.A. Law, "King Leir and King Lear: An
   Examination of the Two Plays", in Studies in Honour of
   T.W. Baldwin, (Illinois, 1958), pp. 112-24, and his
   "Holinshed's Lear Story and Shakespeare's", in
   Studies in Philology, Vol. 47, (1950), pp. 42-50; and
   I. Ribner, "Sidney's Arcadia and the Structure of
   King Lear", in Shakespeare Newsletter, Vol. 24, (1952),
   pp. 63-8.

of his sources he followed a process of selection, augment-
ation and re-orchestration, and part of this process
involved the imagery employed in the sources.

Shakespeare's techniques in this respect were
varied. Sometimes he borrowed a metaphor or simile
directly from a source with little or no recasting; at
other times he appears to have built up significantly on
undeveloped hints provided by the source writers. He was
more heavily indebted to Samuel Harsnett and the writer
responsible for The True Chronicle History of King Leir
than he was to Sidney or Spenser, but each of these writers
provided source material for Shakespeare's imagery. In
the case of Harsnett's pamphlet - A Declaration of
Egregious Popishe Impostures - Shakespeare allowed a
host of names and phrases culled directly from the source
to crowd the pages of his play, especially in the heath
and hovel scenes. On the other hand, he found little in
John Higgins' writing and nothing in Raphael Holinshed to
help him with the imagery in Lear.

The Influence of the Recognised Sources on the Imagery in
"King Lear"

An examination of King Lear and its sources
reveals that Shakespeare's imagery was greatly influenced

by the imagery the source writers employed. One of the
interesting features of the emergent pattern of borrow-
ing and recasting is the fact that there are examples
where a particular image linked itself to a particular point
in the Lear story and was repeated by a number of writers,
including Shakespeare. In Spenser's <u>Faerie Queene</u> (Book
II; canto X) when Lear questioned his daughters as to
which of them loved him most.

> Cordeill said she lou'd him, as behoou'd:
> Whose simple answere, <u>wanting colours faire</u>
> <u>To paint it forth,</u> him to displeasance moou'd.
> (Stanza 28)[1]

In the same context, the Cordella of the anonymous <u>True</u>
<u>Chronicle History of King Leir</u> exclaimed:

> <u>I cannot paint my duty forth</u> in words,
> I hope my deeds shall make report for me,
> (<u>Leir</u> 1.3.78-9)[2]

At the same point in his play, Shakespeare uses a related
image when Cordelia says:

> I want that glib and <u>oily art</u>
> To speak and purpose not. (<u>Lear</u> 1.1.224-5)[3]

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1. All Spenserian quotations are taken from <u>The Poems of</u>
   <u>Spenser,</u> ed. J.C. Smith and E. de Selincourt, (Oxford,
   1965).
2. All references to <u>The True Chronicle History of King</u>
   <u>Leir</u> are from Sidney Lee's edition (London, 1909)
   based on the edition of 1605.
3. All <u>Lear</u> quotations are from the Arden edition of
   <u>King Lear,</u> ed. K. Muir, (London, 1968).

In Shakespeare's "oily art" the notion of painting with
the colours of rhetoric (which seems to be at the base
of his predecessors' images) is compounded with the
direct description of the sisters' obsequious lies con-
tained in the simple figurative use of "oily".

Another set of parallels concerns the use of
the proverbial 'second childhood' image to describe the
old king. In the Mirror for Magistrates (1574) version
of the Lear story, Cordila says:

> Once olde and twice a childe, tis said with you
> Which I affirme by proofe, that was definde;
> In age my father had a childishe minde.
>   (ll. 61-3)[1]

The old dramatist used this description on a number of
occasions, including Ragan's two speeches:

> ...to please the old man's mind,
> Who dotes, as if he were a child again...
>   (Leir 1.2.84-5)
> Alas, you are grown a child again with age.
>   (Leir 5.11.89)

Shakespeare also describes Lear in this way. "Old fools
are babes again," cries Goneril (Lear 1.3.20), and later
Cordelia pleads with the gods:

> Th'untuned and jarring senses O! wind up
> Of this child-changed father.
>   (Lear 4.7.16-7)

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1. From Lily B. Campbell's edition of the Parts Added to
   "The Mirror for Magistrates", (Cambridge, 1946), p.
   147.

As critics have noted, Shakespeare appears to have com-
pressed two ideas into his "child-changed" phrase -
"changed to a child", the image used in his sources; and
"changed in mind by the cruelty of his children", a
secondary meaning superimposed over the idea used in his
sources.[1]

When Shakespeare saw imagery being used effect-
ively in his sources he often borrowed and built on the
ideas used by his predecessors. Notable in the above two
examples is how the Leir dramatist has imitated the imagery
in his sources[2] whereas Shakespeare has adapted the idea
and purpose of the source images, moulding them into more
complex poetic illustrations.

In two of Shakespeare's sources the filial bond
was depicted with plant imagery. In the Arcadia source
story, Sidney showed, in the character of Leonatus, how
"duetifull affection is engraffed in a sonnes hart".[3]
Shakespeare would also have noticed that the Leir dramatist

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1. See Muir's edition of Lear, p. 188, note.
2. For a discussion of the Leir dramatist's use of Spenser's
   Faerie Queene and The Mirror for Magistrates, see Sidney
   Lee's introduction to his edition of King Leir, (op.
   cit.), p. xxx.
3. Sir Philip Sidney, The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia,
   ed. A. Feuillerat, (Cambridge, 1939), p.208.

developed a tree metaphor early in his play:

> Leir. Dear Gonorill, kind Ragan, sweet Cordella,
> Ye flourishing branches of a kingly stock,
> Sprung from a tree that once did flourish green,
> Whose blossoms now are ripp'd with winter's
> frost,
> And pale grim death doth wait upon my steps,..
> (Leir 1.3.25-9)

Later Cordella and Leir have the following exchange:

> Cor. If so the stock be dried with disdain
> Wither'd and sere the branch must needs remain.
> Leir. But thou art now graft in another stock;
> I am the stock, and thou the lovely branch:
> And from my root continual sap shall flow,
> To make thee flourish with perpetual spring.
> (Leir 4.4.13-8)

Shakespeare gives Goneril the word "engraffed" when describing Lear's aged condition (Lear 1.1.297), and Albany's attack on Goneril's treatment of her father uses imagery identical to that of the old dramatist:

> She that herself will sliver and disbranch
> From her material sap, perforce must wither
> And come to deadly use. (Lear 4.2.34-6)[1]

Spenser's account of the Lear story provided

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1. The plants associated with Lear's entrance "Crowned with...all the idle weeds" (see Cordelia's words, 4.4.3-6) could have been prompted by Leir's self-accusation that the "weeds of [his own] rancour chok'd the flower of [Cordella's] grace", and by Perillus' description of Leir's behaviour:

> you name yourself the thorn,
> The weed, the gall, the henbane, and the wormwood.
> (Leir 5.3.70-1, 78-9).

Shakespeare with the basis for another image:

> But true it is, that <u>when the oyle is spent</u>,
> <u>The light goes out, and weeke [i.e. wick] is</u>
> <u>throwne away</u>;
> So when he had resigned his regiment,
> His daughter gan despise his drouping day,
> And wearie waxe of his continuall stay.
> <p align="right">(<u>Faerie Queene</u> II.X.30)</p>

The "light" allusion is here used to describe the waning tolerance of Gonorill, the first daughter Leyr stayed with. In exactly the same context, following Goneril's complaints about the "not-to-be-endured riots" of Lear's retinue, Shakespeare's Fool says: "So <u>out went the candle</u>, and we were left darkling" (<u>Lear</u> 1.4.226).

Turning to Shakespeare's major source, the old chronicle play, we find frequently employed imagery associated with animals, birds, reptiles and monsters. While composing the imagery throughout <u>King Lear</u> Shakespeare took keen interest in what the old dramatist had done, and he often found occasion to repeat the illustrative language used by the source writer.[1]

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1. Those critics who have drawn attention to <u>Lear</u>'s animal and monster motifs have included C.F.Spurgeon, <u>Shakespeare's Imagery</u>, (Cambridge, 1968), pp. 341-2; R.B. Heilman, <u>This Great Stage</u>, (Washington, 1963), pp. 93-105; W.H. Clemen, <u>The Development of Shakespeare's Imagery</u>, (London, 1966), pp. 140-1, 148-52; J.C. McCloskey, "The Emotive Use of Animal Imagery in <u>King Lear</u>" in <u>Shakespeare Quarterly</u>, Vol. 13, (1962), pp. 321ff.; and M. Abend, "'Ingratitude' and the 'Monster' Image" in <u>Notes and Queries</u>, Vol. 194, (1949), pp. 535-6.

Lear's description of Goneril and Regan as
"Those pelican daughters" (Lear 3.4.75) was suggested
by Leir's

> I am as kind as the pelican,
>   That kills itself, to save her young ones'
>   lives.   (Leir 2.3.43-4)

Shakespeare's application of the description differs from
that of the old dramatist in that Lear emphasises his
daughters' unnatural cruelty more than his own kindness.
However, both playwrights fashioned the image to illustrate
the succouring of the daughters at the expense of the
father-king. Both dramatists also saw the ungrateful
daughters as "beasts", "vipers" or "serpents",[1] and
stressed their bestial cruelty.[2] In Leir there are refer-
ences to lions, horses, cats, mice, fleas, ferrets, crakes,
conies, asses and toads. The imaginative language of
Lear boasts reference to most of these and to dozens of
other species as well.

By using animal imagery both dramatists hoped to
create an understanding of the differences existing

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1. Cf. Leir 3.2.28; 4.7.209-10; 5.10.49, 75 and Lear
   1.4.297-8; 2.4.161-2; 5.2.56-7.
2. Cf. Leir 5.2.27 and Lear 3.7.70. Ragan's desire to
   "scratch out" Cordella's eyes materializes in Shakes-
   peare's play as Regan's scratching out of Gloucester's
   eyes.

between man and the lower orders on the great chain of being, yet at the same time they wanted to show how man's potentially divine nature could be degraded by jealousy, greed and lust to such a degree that he could be transformed into a beast. Two imagery parallels reveal that Shakespeare used his animal imagery in the same way that the old dramatist had done throughout the first four acts of his play:

> I weigh no more the murd'ring of a man,
> Than I respect the cracking of a flea,
> When I do catch her biting on my skin.
> (Leir 4.3.55-7)

> I such a fellow saw,
> Which made me think a man a worm...
> As flies to wanton boys, are we to th' Gods;
> They kill us for their sport.
> (Lear 4.1.32-3, 36-7)[1]

In both these quotations the animal image is used to degrade man. By comparing him with the lowest animals in the Creation, the speakers express views on the worthlessness of man's life and his limitations in the face of great universal forces. In these quotations all man's noble and semi-divine qualities are denied.

Contrasted to this are the uses of "horse and cart" images at parallel points in the two plays, by

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1. Muir notes that the worm image echoes Job 25:6 (Lear, Arden edition, p. 149, note). Shakespeare was probably reminded of the Biblical image by the Leir dramatist's use of low animals to describe man.

parallel characters. In <u>Leir</u>, Ragan commands the Messenger
to kill Leir and the honest Perillus. The Messenger
replies:

> Use me, trust me, command me: if I fail in
> anything, tie me to a dung-cart, and make a
> scavenger's horse of me...   (<u>Leir</u> 3.5.68-70)

In <u>Lear</u> Edmund commands the Captain to kill Lear and the
innocent Cordelia. The Captain replies:

> I cannot draw a cart nor eat dried oats;
> If it be man's work I'll do't.
>   (<u>Lear</u> 5.3.39-40)

Both these quotations emphasise man's superiority over
animals, and his capacity for intelligent and efficient
performance. However, both dramatists use the image iron-
ically to show that man's potential for noble deeds has
been degraded to bestial hunting and killing.

The final act of the source play shows victory
for the forces of good and the re-establishment of law and
order in England. In the play's last speech, the "lion-
like" Mumford (5.12.27) is praised for his supremacy in
battle. The end of <u>Lear</u>, unlike that of the source play,
does not assert a hierarchy of existence with the "lion-
like" king of the battlefield and the king of the country
reigning supreme. Rather, the chain of being structure is
questioned:

> Lear.   No, no, no life?
>   Why should a dog, a horse, a rat, have life,
>   And thou no breath at all?   (<u>Lear</u> 5.3.305-7)

If there were a hierarchy of existence Cordelia should have the right to life before these animals - but she doesn't. Beast and man have equal claim upon existence: "Man's life is cheap as beast's" (Lear 2.4.269). Lear escapes his "dog-hearted" daughters only to find that the essential man is a "bare, forked animal". The idealisation of man in the Christian context of the source play was rejected by Shakespeare. The harmonious and ordered world re-established in the final act of the source play gave way to a tragic, confused universe in King Lear.

Shakespeare's disillusionment with the Leir world, while being mainly reflected in his changing of the plot into a tragedy, is also revealed in much of the imagery in Lear. The earlier play is rich in Christian imagery, but this is almost totally lacking in King Lear. Allusions to the Saviour and the Saints give way to pagan deities and the equivocal power of Fortune. In the later play disease images outnumber medicine images by two to one, whereas they have an approximately equal number of iterations in the earlier play. The Lear world does not offer as many remedies for man's plight as did the essentially good world of Leir. The winds and storms of King Leir are incontrovertably on the side of good. Fair winds carry the good characters and their armies back and forth across the English channel, while the thunderstorm

in the play helps Leir and Perillus to escape murder at
the hands of the Messenger. Contrasting with this, the
natural elements in King Lear serve only to buffet and
torture man.[1] The winds are the chance winds of torm-
enting fortune, and the storm threatens the mental and
physical security of all living creatures.

Just as both dramatists described the wicked
daughters as poisonous reptiles, so too did they both
think of the daughters as monsters and hell-fiends. In
Leir, the major examples come from Perillus:

> O monstrous, vild,
> When parents are contemned of the child!
> (Leir 3.1.18-9)

> [to Gonoril] ...thou monster shame unto thy
>   sex:
>   Thou fiend in likeness of a human creature.
>   (Leir 5.10.72-3)

These compare with Albany's description of Goneril:

> thou art a fiend,
> A woman's shape doth shield thee
>   (Lear 4.2.66-7);

Lear's words to Goneril:

> Ingratitude! thou marble-hearted fiend,
> More hideous when thou show'st thee in a child
> Than in the sea-monster (Lear 1.4.268-70);

and the servant's "Women will all turn monsters" (Lear
3.7.101).

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1. This aspect of the Lear imagery has been fully investig-
   ated by Miss Spurgeon in Shakespeare's Imagery, pp. 338-
   43.

Most of the hell and devil imagery in the old play is associated with one character - the Messenger who threatens to kill Leir and Perillus in the open country of Cambria. This scene, with its thunder claps and torment for Leir, is a rudimentary model for the storm scene in the later play. The imagery associated with the Messenger could easily lie behind Shakespeare's choice of imagery to characterise Poor Tom. The Messenger's ultimate oath invokes "hell, and all the devils" (Leir 4.7.190) and he claims he would "meet the devil in his den and try a bout with him" (Leir 4.5.19-20) for the smallest material reward. Edgar, in the role of Poor Tom, is identified by his "foul fiend" catch-phrase and his familiarity with devils. Both the Messenger and Poor Tom are companions to the king and his faithful friend during the storm scenes in their respective plays, and both, in their dialogue with the king, help to clarify the king's aware- ness of his relationship with his daughters and the world at large.

Kenneth Muir has written about the influence of Harsnett's pamphlet on the imaginative and allusive language in King Lear.[1] Echoes from the Declaration of Egregious

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1. See K. Muir, Shakespeare's Sources, pp. 147-61, and ppendix 7 to the rden edition of King Lear, (ed. Muir), pp. 253-6.

Popishe Impostures are to be found throughout the play, but
Act 3, scenes 4 and 6, were the most strongly affected.
Muir finds dozens of parallels with Harsnett in these two
scenes, and most of the parallels concern the rich texture
of Poor Tom's speeches. The antics of devils, the
descriptions of hell and its tortures, the names of fiends -
for all these Shakespeare drew heavily from Harsnett. For
much of the animal imagery used by Poor Tom and later by
Lear, Shakespeare was indebted to this pamphlet. Lear's
obsession with dogs and whips may be traced to a similar
obsession in Harsnett's writing, and Lear's association of
women with hell-torments finds precedent throughout the
pamphlet. Thus Shakespeare may have found the initial
suggestion for Edgar's role as the fiend-haunted heath
companion in the old chronicle play, but the bulk of the
imagery used to characterise Poor Tom came from the pages
of A Declaration of Egregious Popishe Impostures.

Kenneth Muir prints a list of these parallels
in Appendix 7 to the Arden edition of King Lear (pp. 253-6).
The parallels are numerous but the range of ideas involved
in the borrowings is limited. Shakespeare used the
material he took from Harsnett to create a tone or atmos-
phere in the play, rather than to convey precise details
relevant to any particular character or situation. The
imagery associated with hell and monstrous animals used

in the heath scenes might be described as background music
for these scenes. It provides a setting of a particular
quality in which the conflict between Lear and his world
is worked out. In borrowing words and phrases from
Harsnett Shakespeare spared little thought for their purpose
or context in the source. He simply wanted a lot of
imagery with hellish associations, and Samuel Harsnett's
pamphlet was the perfect source.

      Returning to the old chronicle play, there
remain a number of miscellaneous parallels yet to be
pointed out. The old dramatist's iterated use of the
words "nothing" and "the worst" was continued by Shakes-
peare, (cf. Leir 2.3.22-3; 3.3.107; 4.3.57; 5.1.7; 5.3.86
and Lear 1.1.87-90; 1.4.136-9 and others; 2.4.259;
4.1.2-8; 27-8 and others) and Edgar's use of the title
"father" to Gloucester, when the old man does not realise
it is his son speaking, was taken from the disguised
Cordella's meeting with Leir where precisely the same
ignorance of identity had occurred (cf. Leir 5.4.86, 124,
203 and Lear 4.6.220, 257, 288 and 5.2.1). Apart from
the pelican image mentioned earlier, Shakespeare's best-
known image borrowings from the old play were the "young
bones" and "shadow of myself" images which found their
ways into the speeches of Lear and the Fool (cf. Leir
3.3.27 and Lear 2.4.164; Leir 4.2.17 and Lear 1.4.239).

Other image borrowings involve the two
parallel characters Perillus and Kent. In _Leir_, the
Messenger refers to the death he proposes to mete out to
the old king as a journey on which Perillus "must needs
ride post" (_Leir_ 4.7.238). Kent refers to his own
death in a similar way:

> I have a journey, sir, shortly to go;
> My master calls me. (_Lear_ 5.3.321-2)

Earlier in the two plays both the faithful courtiers
referred to the spiritual sight of their respective
monarchs. In each case this follows the king's division
of the kingdom and his rejection of his honest daughter:

> Perillus. Ah, who so blind, as they will not see
> The near approach of their own misery.
> (_Leir_ 2.3.106-7)

> Lear. Out of my sight!
> Kent. See better, Lear.   (_Lear_ 1.1.157-8)

The pattern of sight images in _King Lear_ has
been investigated in a number of critical works.[1] In
developing this pattern Shakespeare was helped by both
the old play and Sidney's _Arcadia_. One of the features

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1. See R.B. Heilman "'The Times' Plaque': The Sight
   Pattern in _King Lear_" in _Quarterly Review of Literature_,
   Vol. 4, (1947), pp. 77-91, and in his _This Great Stage_,
   pp. 41-64; also P.J. Alpers, "_King Lear_ and the Theory
   of the 'Sight Pattern'", in _In Defense of Reading_, No.
   338, (1962), pp. 133-52.

of Shakespeare's sight imagery involves, as in the above

quotation, the difference between physical and spiritual

sight. In the chronicle play the old king's spiritual

eyes were beginning to open when he realized his daughter's

true feelings towards him:

> ...every day her kindness did grow cold,
> Which I with patience put up with enough,
> And seemed not to see the things I saw.
> (Leir 5.4.168-70)

Shakespeare's old king is experiencing a similar éclair-

cissement during the mad scene in which he exclaims: "Get

thee glass eyes; And...seen To see the things thou dost

not" (Lear 4.6.172-4). The gaining of spiritual sight,

which is one of the major themes of both the Gloucester

sub-plot and the main plot, also owes something to the

Arcadia passage. There the Paphlagonian king speaks of

how his son's kindness reveals "Even to my blind eyes...

my naughtiness". Repentance for physical actions after

gaining spiritual sight also happens with Gloucester:

"I...want no eyes; I stumbled when I saw" (Lear 4.1.18-9).[1]

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1. Muir reviews the opinions of several critics who believe
   Shakespeare was influenced by Montaigne's Apology for
   Raymond Sebonde in Appendix 6 to the Arden edition of
   King Lear. The passage quoted as having contributed to
   Shakespeare's sight pattern does not bear as direct a
   relationship to Shakespeare's lines as do the quotations
   offered by the recognized sources:

   The weakness of our judgement helps us more than our
   strength to compasse the same, and our blindnesse more
   than our cleare-sighted eyes.
        (iii.298 in Florio's translation quoted by Muir).

The initial idea for Regan's scratching out of Gloucester's eyes probably came from Ragan's desire to blind Cordella: she wishes "with these nails [to] scratch out her [sister's] hateful eyes" (Leir 5.2.27). Gloucester says: "I would not see thy cruel nails Pluck out [Lear's] poor old eyes" (Lear 3.7.55-6).

Another image pattern that has been discussed by critics is the clothing motif running through the play.[1] Attention was drawn to clothing in the old chronicle play by the regular use of disguises, and by the meaningful incident in which Leir is reduced to the situation where he must trade his robe, his last possession of value, in payment for his passage to France to find Cordella. Shakespeare built on this symbolic situation when he introduced the fantastically dressed Lear on stage (4.6.81) reduced to wearing the flowers of the field. The main borrowing Shakespeare made for his clothing imagery involves the old king's attitude towards his daughters' increasing pomp and the fact

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1. See R.B. Heilman, "Poor Naked Wretches and Proud Array: The Clothes Pattern in King Lear", in Western Review, (Lawrence), Vol. 12, (Autumn, 1947), pp. 5-15; T.N. Greenfield, "The Clothing Motif in King Lear", in Shakespeare Quarterly, Vol. 5, (1954), pp. 281-6; and D. Frye, "The Context of Lear's Unbuttoning", in English Literary History, Vol. 32, (1965), pp. 17-31.

that they become more and more unwilling to spend money on

his upkeep. In Leir, Gonorill says:

> I cannot make me a new fashion'd gown,
> And set it forth with more than common cost;
> But his old doting doltish wither'd wit,
> Is sure to give a senseless check for it.
> (Leir 3.2.9-12)

In his "reason not the need" speech Lear uses a reference

to his daughter's gown to illustrate his point:

> Thou art a lady;
> If only to go warm were gorgeous,
> Why, nature needs not what thou gorgeous
> wear'st.   (Lear 2.4.269-71)

It can be seen that most of the recognized

sources for King Lear influenced imagery in Shakespeare's

play. This is especially true of the longer source works

- The True Chronicle History of King Leir and Harsnett's

Declaration of Egregious Popishe Impostures. From the

source play Shakespeare borrowed imagery for several

purposes - for stressing relationships within the world

of the play (e.g. animal and plant imagery), for illust-

rating thematic developments (e.g. sight and clothing

imagery) and for individualization of character (e.g.

monster and devil imagery in the case of the wicked

daughters). Shakespeare's method of borrowing from

Harsnett's pamphlet was different, though nonetheless

effective. This he used as a grab-bag for material which

would set up hellish associations throughout selected

scenes of the play. These associations served to individualize the character portrayed by Edgar. They also illustrated the inner world of Lear's mind as he experienced the nadir of his mental development in the play.

Shakespeare was directly stimulated by the imagery in his sources. Sometimes this raw material appears unadulterated in his play, though more often he adapted it to produce more satisfying poetic statements.

Chaucer's "Monk's Tale": A Neglected Minor Source for "King Lear"?

Writing on the sources of King Lear, Maynard Mack said:

> One cannot but wonder whether the stories told in Scripture of the punishment of Nebuchadnezzar, who for his pride was driven mad and made to live on grass as a beast among beasts, may not lie somewhere in the background of Lear's madness, his fellowing with the wolf and owl, and his stress on man's life becoming "cheap as beast's".[1]

Though Nebuchadnezzar is not mentioned in King Lear Shakespeare has shown elsewhere that he was familiar with this Biblical character. In All's Well that Ends Well the Countess of Rousillon's Clown makes a punning reference to Nebuchadnezzar and his grass-eating experience (4.5.21).

1. M. Mack, "King Lear" in Our Time, (London, 1966), p. 49 f/n.

Shakespeare would have had access to the Nebuchadnezzar
story in either the Genevan or the Bishops' versions of
the Bible but an examination of the relevant chapters of
the book of Daniel reveals no direct borrowing for the
writing of King Lear. There certainly are thematic parallels:
the division of the kingdom (Daniel 5:28); the king driven
out to live with the beasts of the field (Daniel 4:15); his
hardship in the storms (Daniel 4:33); his madness (Daniel
4:16) and the subsequent return of his reason (Daniel 4.34).
However, there are no verbal echoes of the Biblical account
in King Lear, and there are no incidents or thematic issues
that Shakespeare could not have found in another version of
the Nebuchadnezzar story available to him, i.e. the
account given by Chaucer in his Canterbury Tales.

In "The Monk's Tale" Chaucer recounted the
falls, from high to low estate, of seventeen mythological
and historical characters. The fifth fall was that of
Nebuchadnezzar, while the twelfth fall was that of Nero.
F.E. Budd, after making a thorough examination of all the
source materials available to Shakespeare, has shown that
the allusion to Nero in King Lear almost certainly
derives from a knowledge of Chaucer's "Monk's Tale".[1]

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1. See F.E. Budd, "Shakespeare, Chaucer and Harsnett", in
Review of English Studies, Vol. 11, (1935), pp. 421-9.

Shakespeare makes Edgar remark: "Nero is an angler"

(3.4.6-7). Chaucer had written:

> Nettes of gold threed hadde he greet plentee
> To fisshe in Tybre, whan hym liste pleye.
> (VII. 2475-6)[1]

Budd added two more verbal parallels between

"The Monk's Tale" and King Lear, but he made no attempt

to establish the Chaucer work as a minor source of any

significance. Muir's attitude is similar: Shakespeare

had "The Monk's Tale" in mind when he made the allusion

to Nero's angling, but his debt was no greater than this.[2]

Re-examination of "The Monk's Tale" yields several

significant thematic parallels with Lear not mentioned

by either Budd or Muir, as well as a number of strong

verbal echoes. On these grounds it appears possible

that Shakespeare consulted Chaucer's work during the

composition of King Lear.

One of the recognized sources for King Lear is

John Higgins' poem about the fall of Cordila, which was

first published in the 1574 edition of The Mirror for

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1. All references to the Canterbury Tales are taken from The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, ed. F.N. Robinson, (2nd edn.), (Oxford, 1957).
2. See K. Muir, Shakespeare's Sources, (London, 1957), Vol. 1, p. 157.

Magistrates.[1] Chaucer's "Monk's Tale" and The Mirror

are closely related literary works. Chaucer sub-titled

his tale "the Monkes Tale De Casibus Virorum Illustrium",

referring to the De Casibus of Boccaccio which served

both as model and source for the Monk's narration. The

Mirror for Magistrates was designed as a successor to

that line of works which dealt with "the fall of Prynces

... fro(m) the begynnyng of the world vntyll this time"[2]

and which could be traced back through Lydgate's The

Fall of Princes to Boccaccio's De Casibus. In prefaces

to earlier versions of The Mirror William Baldwin praised

the work of Boccaccio and explained how The Mirror was

intended to bring up to date the record begun in the De

Casibus by recounting the falls of high personages in

English history from the birth of Christ to the sixteenth

century.[3]

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1. For the text of Higgins' poem see Lily Campbell's
   edition of the Parts Added to "The Mirror for Magistrates"
   by John Higgins and Thomas Blenerhasset, (Cambridge,
   1946), pp. 145-60.
2. From the title-page of the Dyce copy of Wayland's
   edition of Lydgate's The Fall of Princes (a trans-
   lation of a French text based on Boccaccio's De Casibus
   Virorum Illustrium), printed as frontispiece to Lily
   Campbell's edition of The Mirror for Magistrates, (New
   York, 1960).
3. See Lily Campbell's edition, pp. 63-71. Later John
   Higgins added the falls of "the first infortunate
   Princes of this lande: From the comming of Brute to
   the incarnation of our sauiour".

These two works were akin in subject, theme and form. Their resemblance derived from their common heritage in Boccaccio. Chaucer stated his intention to show, in "The Monk's Tale",

> hym that stood in greet prosperitee,
> And is yfallen out of heigh degree
> Into myserie, and endeth wrecchedly.
> (VII. 1975-7)

Baldwin's Mirror was introduced thus:

> The Mirour for Magistrates wherein may be seene
> by examples passed in this Realme, with howe
> greueous plagues, vyces are punished in great
> Princes and Magistrates, and how frayle and
> vnstable wordly prosperitie is founde, where
> Fortune seemeth most highly to fauour.[1]

Both Chaucer and Baldwin (and later Higgins) presented their short verse biographies within a framework of Christian didacticism. The lesson these examples were to teach, as is obvious from the above quotations, was that worldly achievements were no guarantee against a downfall to wretchedness, and that the vain and proud were inevitably sunk into misery. A further link between Chaucer and The Mirror involved the fact that the stanza used most extensively in The Mirror was the rhyme royal, introduced into English by Chaucer and perfected by him in the Canterbury Tales.

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1. From the title-page of the 1574 edition of Baldwin's Mirror for Magistrates, in Lily Campbell's edition, p. 425.

Nevill Coghill's article on "Shakespeare's
Reading in Chaucer"[1] shows that Shakespeare was familiar
with many of Chaucer's works. Chaucer was common read-
ing in Tudor times and was recommended by the educator
Roger Ascham. Chaucer was praised and imitated by
writers and poets, including Spenser, and Sidney. He
was further lauded by Shakespeare's contemporaries Jonson,
Daniel, Drayton and Fletcher (and perhaps Shakespeare
himself in the Prologue to the Two Noble Kinsmen).[2]

One of the first to point out Shakespeare's
familiarity with Chaucer was J.W. Hales.[3] He had found
"various indications that the writings of Chaucer were
anything but a sealed or an unopened book to him".[4] Hales
noted that Shakespeare was indebted to "The Knight's Tale"
and Troilus and Criseyde for A Midsummer Night's Dream

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1. In Elizabethan and Jacobean Studies presented to F.P.
   Wilson, ed. H. Davis and H. Gardner, (Oxford, 1959),
   pp. 86-99.
2. A significant factor in this discussion is the public-
   ation of Speght's edition of Chaucer's works in 1598.
   For an appraisal of "The Elizabethan Appreciation of
   Chaucer", see the chapter under that title in John
   Buxton's book Elizabethan Taste, (London, 1965), pp.
   223-30.
3. In his Notes and Essays on Shakespeare (London, 1884).
   See chapter 3: "Chaucer and Shakespeare", pp. 56-99.
4. J.W. Hales, ibid. p. 92.

and <u>Troilus and Cressida</u>. Hales also mentioned the fact
that Shakespeare repeated the mistake made by Chaucer in
"The Monk's Tale" where he set the scene of Julius
Caesar's death in the Capitol. Other source critics have
shown that Shakespeare also used aspects of "The Merchant's
Tale" and <u>The Legend of Good Women</u> for <u>A Midsummer Night's
Dream</u>, and that <u>The Two Noble Kinsmen</u> involved borrowings
from "The Knight's Tale".

Coghill extended the list of Shakespeare's
reading further to include <u>The Parliament of Fowls</u>, <u>The
House of Fame</u>, and others of the <u>Canterbury Tales</u>. He also
found that Shakespeare was especially influenced by
Chaucer's imagery. Two striking parallels between
<u>Richard II</u> and the <u>Canterbury Tales</u> concern unusual images:
the two buckets image in <u>Richard II</u> 4.1.184-7 distinctly
parallels "The Knight's Tale" 1530-3; similarly the image
of bearing fire to the Caucasus at 1.3.294-5 in <u>Richard II</u>
is a distinct echo of "The Wife of Bath's Tale" (D) 1139-
40.

The parallels between <u>King Lear</u> and "The Monk's
Tale" include thematic and notional parallels, verbal
echoes, and the use of aspects of Chaucer's tale as source
material for Shakespeare's imagery. In citing parallels
of theme, phrasing, sentiment and imagery, I will under-
line those parallels of imagery which appear to be signif-
icant to this study.

The main image illustrating the Fortune theme in both works is the wheel. One of the Monk's characters cries:

>   Allas, Fortune, and weylaway!
>   Thy false wheel my wo al may I wyte.
>   (VII. 2445-6)

Kent's plea to Fortune runs thus:

>   Fortune, good night; smile once more; turn thy
>   wheel!   (2.2.173)

Both writers used the wheel image several times, though this means little since Fortune's wheel was a common motif in literature from Medieval to Jacobean times. But there are more interesting similarities between the Fortune themes in each play. The Monk says:

>   whan that Fortune list to flee,
>   Ther may no man the cours of hire withholde.
>   (VII. 1995-6)

This is similar to the advice given by the Fool in <u>Lear</u>:

>   Let go thy hold when a great wheel runs down
>   a hill, lest it break thy neck with following.
>   (2.4.71-3)

Two more lines may be compared:

>   to thise...two
>   Fortune was first freend, and sitthe foo.
>   (VII. 2722-3)

>   If Fortune brag of two she loved and hated,
>   One of them we behold. (5.3.280-1)

Within the Fortune theme there are further similarities, the most significant of which concerns the Fool's song at 2.4.78-81:

> That sir which serves and seeks for gain,
>   And follows but for form,
> Will pack when it begins to rain,
>   And leave thee in the storm.

These lines, taken together with the fact that Lear has

lost his kingdom, riches, retainers, and the love of the

daughters who swore their faithfulness, bear a resemblance

to the moral the Monk draws from the life of Belshazzar:

> when Fortune wole a man forsake,
> She bereth awey his regne and his richesse,
> And eek his freendes, both moore and lesse.
> For what man that hath freendes thurgh Fortune,
> Mishap wol maken hem enemys, I gesse.
> (VII. 2241-5)

Mention of Belshazzar and the division of his

kingdom (VII. 2190) brings us to another set of parallels

involving incidents and language. The fall of a king

from power was a theme common to most of the tragedies

in "The Monk's Tale". Belshazzar's father, Nebuchadnezzar,

like Lear,

> loste his dignytee,
> And lyk a beest hym semed for to bee,
> And eet hey as an oxe, and lay theroute
> In reyn; with wilde beestes walked hee...
> And lik an egles fetheres wax his heres...
> Til God relessed hym a certeyn yeres,
> And yaf hym wit...   (VII. 2170-8)

This passage contains all the notables of Lear's heath

experience - his hovelling "with swine...In short and

musty straw" (4.7.39-40), his contending with "wind and

rain" (3.1.11), his comradeship "with the wolf and owl"

(2.4.212), the tempest's lack of respect for his "white

hair" (3.1.7-9), his madness and the need for divine

intervention to effect a cure:

> Kent. ...his wits are gone.
> Cordelia. O you kind Gods,
> Cure this great breach in his abused nature!
> (3.6.90; 4.7.14-15)

Perhaps Maynard Mack's query about the resemblance between

the experiences of Lear and Nebuchadnezzar, which opened

this discussion, is answered by the existence of the

above passage in Chaucer.

There is a strong anti-female theme running

through Chaucer's tale. This is prepared for in "The

Prologue of the Monk's Tale" where the Host complains

bitterly about the unbearable behaviour of his wife. He

describes the way she runs his household by quoting her

as saying:

> 'I wol have thy knyf,
> And <u>thou shalt have my distaf and go spynne</u>!...
> Allas!' she seith, 'that evere I was shape
> To wedden <u>a milksop, or a coward ape</u>!...
> Thou darst not stonden by thy wyves right!'
> (VII. 1906-12)

Parallels to these lines can be found in the speeches of

Goneril:

> I must change arms at home, and <u>give the distaff</u>
> <u>Into my husband's hands</u>.
> ...ere long you are like to hear,
> If you dare venture in your own behalf,
> A mistress's command. (4.2.17-21)

Just before and just after these words Goneril describes

her husband as "<u>cowish</u>" and a "<u>Milk-liver'd man</u>!" (4.7.12,50).

After the fearful picture painted by the Host, the Monk continues with the anti-female theme. Women were directly responsible for the falls of Adam, Samson, Hercules and Holofernes (VII. 2012; 2120; 2053; and 2571), wenches and concubines caused Belshazzar's destruction (VII. 2227) and the downfalls of most of the others are attributed to the female Fortune (e.g. VII. 2661; 2724; 2765). Zenobia is the only woman praised by the Monk. She was an extremely virtuous queen. She "fledde Office of wommen" (VII. 2255-6) and only allowed her husband to lie with her once a month until she was pregnant. Then

> He gat namoore of hire, for thus she seyde,
> It was to wyves lecherie and shame,
> In oother caas, if that men with hem pleyde.
> (VII. 2292-4)

After bearing two sons she devoted her life to learning and chastity.

Shakespeare took up the anti-female theme. Lear's dislike for women increases as the play progresses, culminating in his impassioned outburst against women's lechery at 4.6.120-31. Through imagery and incident Shakespeare painted Goneril and Regan as fiendishly foul as he could, and like the fate eventually suffered by the Monk's Zenobia, the 'good woman' figure in Cordelia was brought to a tragic end.

One of the Monk's biographies concerned the fall of Samson. The blinding of Gloucester is reminiscent of

the blinding of Samson in the Monk's narration. In the
Chaucer tale,

> They bounde hym faste and putten out his yen.
> (VII. 2070)

This is exactly what happens to Gloucester:

> Cornwall: Bind fast his corky arms.
>   ...Bind him...
> Goneril: Pluck out his eyes.
>   (3.7.29, 31; 3.7.6)

The Samson section may have helped provide the firing like
foxes image used by Lear:

> ...all hir tayles [Samson] togydre bond,
> And sette the foxes tayles all on fire,
> For he on every tayl had knyt a brond.
>   (VII. 2032-4)

> Lear. He that parts us shall bring a brand from
>   heaven,
>   And fire us hence like foxes.
>   (5.3.22-3)[1]

Lear makes this speech as he and Cordelia set off for
prison. One of the sections of "The Monk's Tale" was
set in a prison, and involved the plight of Hugelino, the
Count of Pisa, and his young children. This scene could
have provided Shakespeare with a variety of ideas, includ-
ing the basis for the following image:

> in prisoun put was he,
> And with hym been his litel children thre;...
> Allas, Fortune! it was greet crueltee
> Swiche briddes for to putte in swich a cage!
>   (VII. 2410-4)

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1. The Harsnett parallel for this image pointed out by
   Muir (Arden edition, p. 255) does not contain the
   "brand" echo.

> Lear: Come, let's away to prison;
>   We two alone will sing <u>like birds i' th' cage.</u>
>   (5.3.8-9)

Shakespeare seems to parallel Chaucer's scene again where

Lear continued:

> Ere they shall make us weep: we'll see 'em
> starved first.   (5.3.25)

Hugelino could not prevent himself from weeping, and his

starving son said:

> 'Fader, why do ye wepe?
> Whanne wol the gayler bryngen oure potage?...
> I am so hungry...'   (VII. 2432-5)

<u>King Lear</u> contains another parallel involving the hunger

theme of the Hugelino section. Chaucer described filial

gratitude with the following words:

> His children wende that it for hunger was
> That <u>he his armes gnow,</u> and nat for wo,
> And seyde, "Fader, do nat so, allas!
> But rather <u>ete the flessh upon us</u> two.
> <u>Our flessh thou yaf us, take oure flessh us fro,</u>
> And ete ynogh". (VII. 2447-12)

Shakespeare could have adapted this idea in the flesh-

eating image he used to describe filial ingratitude:

> Is is not as <u>this mouth should tear this hand</u>
> For lifting food to 't?...
> Is it the fashion that discarded fathers
> Should have thus <u>little mercy on their flesh</u>?
>   ...'twas this flesh begot
> Those pelican daughters. (3.4.15-6, 72-5)

Shakespeare also evoked the cannibal theme at 1.1.117,

where he referred to one who "<u>makes his generation messes</u>

To gorge his appetite".

Another parallel between the two works concerns the unkind brother theme. The Edgar versus Edmund sub-plot resembles the Monk's story of the conflict between King Peter of Spain and his bastard brother:

> Out of thy land thy brother made thee flee...
> Succedynge in thy regne and in thy rente.
> <div align="right">(VII. 2378, 2382)</div>

Another plot incident may have been suggested by the Monk's Cresus story which involved a proud king, his dutiful daughter, and a hanging, which was the type of death Shakespeare created for Cordelia.[1]

Hence it appears possible that Shakespeare consulted "The Monk's Tale" during the composition of King Lear. Chaucer's tale was closely related to The Mirror for Magistrates, a source Shakespeare undoubtedly used, and this may have provided the associative link in Shakespeare's mind which caused him to turn to Chaucer's work. Shakespeare may have also been attracted by the fact that Chaucer's tale contained the Nebuchadnezzar story, which closely resembled the experiences of Lear.

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1. Miscellaneous parallels worthy of mention are as follows: Kent's advice to Lear is reminiscent of Daniel's advice to Belshazzar: "Kyng...thou...heryest false goddes cursedly" (VII. 2229). Kent says: "...by Apollo, King, Thou swear'st thy Gods in vain" (1.1.161). Chaucer mentions Centaurs (VII. 2099, cf. Lear 4.6.126) and Daniel's gelding (VII. 2152, cf. Lear 1.5.53), and the name "Albon", suggested for the Monk (VII. 1930), parallels "Albany".

"The Monk's Tale" and King Lear are linked by their common themes - the major theme of a king's fall from high to low estate, together with themes concerning blinding, cannibalism, Fortune, kingdom division, female deceit and the unkind bastard brother. There exist several striking verbal parallels between the two works. A number of these involve the imagery in Shakespeare's play. Chaucer could have provided source material for Shakespeare's caged birds image, his brand from heaven image, his bite-the-hand-that-feeds-it image, his imagery used to illustrate the suffering of Lear on the heath, and the imagery employed in the bitter speeches of Goneril against her husband.

Most of the play's recognised sources exerted observable influence upon the imagery in King Lear. At times Shakespeare can be seen to have reacted to striking imagery in his source works by including closely related imagery in his play, especially in the cases where an image had linked itself to the same event and character in different source writer's versions of the story. Un-doubtedly the greatest overall influence was exerted by the major source, the Leir chronicle play, but the imagery in Shakespeare's heath and hovel scenes received intense and vital enrichment from the dramatist's reading of Samuel Harsnett's Popishe Impostures pamphlet. In addition, it

is possible that Shakespeare was influenced by Chaucer's "Monk's Tale" in the writing of <u>King Lear</u>, and some of the play's images may have derived from this source.

A comparison of the imagery in the plays with the texts of the sources indicates that Shakespeare's imagery was strongly influenced by literary sources. In each of the major tragedies he borrowed regularly from existent writings. However, he had no formula for borrowing — the writing of each new play involved a new set of source works and a different set of borrowing methods. When he could Shakespeare borrowed regularly from his main source for both major and minor aspects of his play's imagery, as in <u>King Lear</u> and <u>Macbeth</u>. In the case of <u>Othello</u>, where the main source was unhelpful in providing material for imagery, he turned to sources of secondary importance. However, even when the main source had exerted a strong influence, Shakespeare still made use of a wide range of secondary sources, integrating their influence into his play's imagery. For example, in the writing of <u>King Lear</u> he consulted one particular literary source — a topical pamphlet — almost solely for the purpose of using its contents as material in his imagery.

The main sources of <u>Macbeth</u> and <u>Lear</u> provided Shakespeare with many ideas for imagery. In <u>Macbeth</u>'s source the historian employed illustrative details of a

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

A comparison of the imagery in the plays with the texts of the sources indicates that Shakespeare's imagery was strongly influenced by literary sources. In each of the major tragedies he borrowed regularly from existent writings. However, he had no formula for borrowing -- the writing of each new play involved a new set of source works and a different set of borrowing methods. When he could Shakespeare borrowed regularly from his main source for both major and minor aspects of his play's imagery, as in King Lear and Macbeth. In the case of Othello, where the main source was unhelpful in providing material for imagery, he turned to sources of secondary importance. However, even when the main source had exerted a strong influence, Shakespeare still made use of a wide range of secondary sources, integrating their influence into his play's imagery. For example, in the writing of King Lear he consulted one particular literary source -- a topical pamphlet -- almost solely for the purpose of using its contents as material in his imagery.

The main sources of Macbeth and Lear provided Shakespeare with many ideas for imagery. In Macbeth's source the historian employed illustrative details of a

figurative nature which Shakespeare adapted for his play. During the writing of _Lear_ Shakespeare took a keen interest in how the source dramatist used imagery to illustrate the themes in his play. In his borrowing of imagery material from both these sources Shakespeare exercised careful and discriminating choice, rejecting elements which did not fit into the overall patterns in each play and selecting those aspects which most suited his purposes. Especially in the comparison of _Macbeth_ with its main source can be seen Shakespeare's sure control over the fashioning of imagery in his drama. Both Holinshed's _Chronicles_ and the _Leir_ play exerted direct influence on Shakespeare's imagery, as they did on the plots, themes and characters, in _Macbeth_ and _King Lear_. On the other hand, _Othello_ took only its skeletal features from Cinthio's prosaic tale. Shakespeare's aggrandizing of the story and ennobling of the main character coincided with his addition of an almost totally new imaginative dimension in the language of the play. Only a few traces of the original are observable in the imagery of _Othello_. Although the nature of the imagery in _Hamlet_'s main source can only be guessed at, it is highly likely that Shakespeare retained some of its qualities in his play. These borrowings probably included a Senecan atmosphere and some minor aspects of imagery traceable from _Hamlet_ back to the _Ur-Hamlet_'s source in Belleforest.

The many links observed between play and main source in the cases of <u>King Lear</u> and <u>Macbeth</u> indicate that one of Shakespeare's propensities was to use what was within easy reach as the raw material for his imagery. On the other hand, equally exemplified in the imagery of these two plays, he was not averse to going much further afield for material -- the variety of literary sources he used in the creation of his imagery was as wide as that used in the creation of all the other aspects of his plays. From the Bible to popular ballads, from the classics to common pamphlets, from old plays to his own previous works, many forms and intellectual levels of literature were utilized. The wide reading interest which influenced his imagery contributed significantly to the universal quality of the poetry in his tragedies.

There was variety too in the modes of influence exerted by these various sources. Sometimes the borrowing involved a whole image (e.g. a simile or a metaphor) lifted from the source work and placed neatly in the play. At other times it was just subject-matter for an image that Shakespeare borrowed. Sometimes one can see Shakespeare reacted to developed patterns in his source by reproducing similar patterns in his plays. Sometimes he appears to have been struck by the aptness of an isolated image in his source, reproducing it similarly isolated in

his play. Most often, however, Shakespeare seized what was potential or only half-formed in his source and deepened or enriched it to produce a much more satisfying poetic statement or illustration. Hints and suggestions were often transformed into important images, while on other occasions fully developed though unsuitable images in the source were adapted, modified and improved for inclusion in the play. Sometimes Shakespeare showed great selectivity in his borrowings, tailoring the borrowed material to fit existent patterns in his play (e.g. in his use of the main source for Macbeth). Yet on another occasion he simply used his source as a grab-bag for imagery, appearing to practise little selectivity in letting the unprocessed source material crowd the pages of his play (see his use of Harsnett's pamphlet for King Lear). Source influence is discernible in most aspects of his imagery's functioning -- in the creation of mood or atmosphere, in the development of themes, in the delineation of character, in the simple illustration of a point. Shakespeare rarely failed to notice the effectively applied image in his source. He appears to have been always ready to adapt and augment the moderately successful image, but he was quick to identify and re-use the very successful one. Sometimes it can also be seen that Shakespeare amalgamated a number of influences to produce a complex image by

combining two or more source suggestions, often from totally unlike sources.

Shakespeare also made use of the fact of his borrowing. In these cases the source of the image was as important as the image itself, for example in the case of imagery derived from the Bible. Here Shakespeare exploited the aura of authority and gravity surrounding the source of the image to gain added impact. In such cases he was depending on his audience's recognition of the image's source.

By identifying these links between literary sources and the imagery in the plays some of the steps taken by Shakespeare in the fashioning of his imagery have been observed. His selection and reworking of source images was often very purposeful, and his exploiting of the possibilities inherent in his source material was done with a calculating eye set on the quality and effectiveness of his finished dramatic product. The enrichment of his poetic language and the strengthening of his themes through imagery derived from literary sources were carried out, in many cases, in a logical and conscientious way. It seems most unlikely that these links between source and play's imagery could have occurred without the dramatist's awareness. These results indicate that Shakespeare's

imagery was as much a product of the artist's conscious mastery over his sources as were the plots, incidents and characters in his plays. In the fashioning of much of the imagery in the major tragedies Shakespeare made use of the imagery and other material in his literary sources.

LIST OF WORKS CONSULTED

a)   The works consulted are grouped in the following
     categories:

          1. Texts
          2. General
          3. Macbeth
          4. Hamlet
          5. Othello
          6. King Lear

b)   The following abbreviations are used in title
     entries:

          AMS: Adams Memorial Studies, ed. McManaway,
                   Dawson and Willoughby, Folger Library,
                   Washington, 1948.
          ELH: English Literary History
          MLN: Modern Language Notes
          MLR: Modern Language Review
          MP: Modern Philology
          N&Q: Notes and Queries
          PMLA: Publications of the Modern Language
                   Association of America
          PQ: Philological Quarterly
          RES: Review of English Studies
          SEL: Studies in English Literature
          SNL: The Shakespeare Newsletter
          SQ: Shakespeare Quarterly
          SS: Shakespeare Survey
          SStud: Shakespeare Studies
          TLS: Times Literary Supplement

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