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Glenn Charles Williams

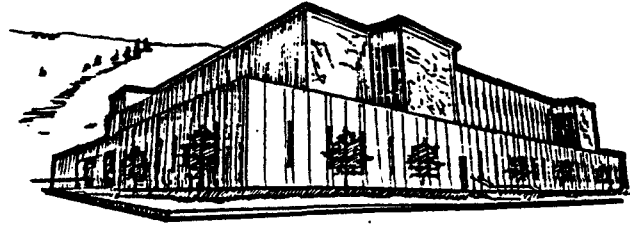*The University of Montana*

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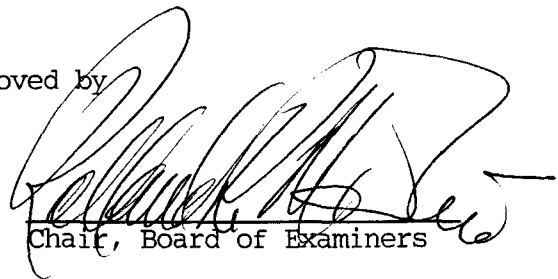
DIRECTING SHAKESPEARE IN CONTEMPORARY TIMES
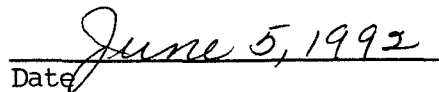

By

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Towards a Postmodern <u>Macbeth</u>:
Directing Shakespeare in Contemporary Times (77 pp.)

Director: Rolland Meinholtz

   This thesis explores the role of the modern director as he attempts
to explore postmodern ideas in a production from a Shakespearean
playscript. The tension between Shakespeare's texts and modern
theatrical experience is usually explored through two disparate
voices: the literary critic interested in the vivisection and
analysis of the static, completed text, with little regard to the
role of production in dramatic literature; and the drama
practitioner interested in production values, as relative to an
audience's reactions, with little regard to critical analysis. This
division is no longer practical.

   Directing a Shakespearean playscript in a postmodern era forces the
director into the role of theorist as well as practitioner. The
successful director is obliged to search for performance selvedges
and to question the structural and thematic content of Shakespeare's
texts in light of present views on the ambiguity and inadequacy of
language, the failure of naturalistic representation, the
solidification of production expectations through repetition, and the
changing values of Western society in a post-holocaust, nuclear age.
The postmodern director must, in view of these problems, reexamine
the role of the actor and designer and their relationship to the
audience.

   As a playscript, <u>The Tragedy of Macbeth</u>, by William Shakespeare,
offers particularly strong opportunities to express this thesis.
Through analysis, design and rehearsal, a production of <u>Macbeth</u> was
mounted; the production attempted to explore the postmodern aspects
of <u>Macbeth</u>. The production occured in the Masquer Theatre at the
University of Montana from 17 May through 3 June 1989. Thesis
concepts will be used as fulcrums on which to balance the viability
and vulnerablility of the production, and to explore <u>Macbeth</u>'s
potential as a postmodern dramatic experience.

PREFACE

Though this thesis concerns itself primarily with theories
involving the director's work in producing Macbeth and other
Shakespeare playscripts in postmodern times, the practice of these
theories is where their true values are mirrored. For this reason, a
production of Macbeth, which attempted to employ these theories and
methods, was mounted at the University of Montana's Masquer Theatre
from 17 May to 3 June 1989. The thesis writer served in the capacity
of director for the production. Since the selection of playscripts
was made a year in advance of the production dates, an unusually
lengthy research period was granted the director, allowing further
application of theory. The rehearsals for the production lasted
around four hours, five times a week, for six weeks. There were
fifteen performances and six abbreviated matinees, most of which saw
strong houses. The full performances lasted an average two hours and
forty minutes without the intermission. References made to this
production in the body of the thesis will be recognized by the use of
the term "UM Production".

The script used in the UM Production (as explored in Chapter 5)
was created specifically for this performance. The starting point
for the script was Horace Howard Furness, Jr., ed., A New Variorum
Edition of Shakespeare, Vol: Macbeth (New York: Dover Publications,
Inc., 1963). Any reference to the text in the body of the thesis

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Perhaps more than any other Shakespearean play, Macbeth appears
to validate Charles Lamb's contention that the plays cannot be given
a satisfying theatrical representation. While scholars continue to
regard it as a masterpiece fully deserving its place with Hamlet,
Lear, and Othello, only three major professional productions in the
past fifty years have been critical successes and a procession much
longer than the show of kings in IV.i could be composed of the great
actors and actresses who have been found wanting in the principal
roles. Macbeth is fast replacing Lear as the unactable play. This
discrepancy between reading and performance demands some attention,
though in the works annotated in this bibliography it is scarcely
mentioned.

--Thomas Wheeler, Macbeth, an annotated bibliography

                                    It is a Tale
         Told by an Ideot, full of sound and fury
         Signifying nothing.

                              --Macbeth, 5.5.30-32

        There seems to be a vague know-nothingism at work in our
theatre which is suspicious of all theories, no matter how
interesting or useful. Not only do directors and actors want
increasingly to be creative, but they also tend to think of creative
as being the opposite of intellectual. Being convinced that
inspiration comes only from pure sensation, and never cognition, they
fear that any theorizing, other than the most crude and blatant, will
somehow be artistically stifling. There is of course no basis for
such fear; the great artists throughout history have all been
seriously concerned with theory as well as practice. Each feeds on
the other--artistic theory cannot advance without drawing on examples
of specific works, but neither can artistic creation rise above the
hack level without a certain amount of theoretical consideration.

--Richard Hornby, Script Into Performance

INTRODUCTION

An unheated, unemotional discussion of directing Shakespeare in
a postmodern way seems, at times, unlikely. The reason probably lies
in a misunderstanding—a belief that postmodernism claims to be "the
right way to do it." But postmodernism is not, really, an "-ism" at
all, and does not, therefore, seek to replace or surpass the ideas of
modernism. Jean-François Lyotard calls modernism:

> an aesthetic of the sublime, though a nostalgic one. It
> allows the unpresentable to be put forward only as the missing
> contents; but the form, because of its recognizable consis-
> tency, continues to offer to the reader or viewer matter for
> solace or pleasure.[1]

Lyotard goes on to suggest that modernism tries "to supply reality"
while postmodernism seeks "to invent allusions to the conceivable
which cannot be presented."[2] Modernism seeks, therefore, to find
definitive meaning from fixed texts, supplied by an author interested
in reflecting a knowable reality.

Postmodernism is, by nature (or by the lack of a nature),
argumentative. It questions the way we do things; it questions the
things themselves; it questions the doing; it questions the way we
question. Postmodernism is a response residing within modernism—an
attitude of questioning not only meaning, but form itself. Albrecht
Wellmer suggests that

> with postmodernism, ironically enough, it becomes obvious
> that the critique of the modern, inasmuch as it knows its own
> parameters, can only aim at expanding the interior space of

1

modernity, not at surpassing it. For it is the very gesture of radical surpassing—romantic utopianism—that postmodernism has called into question. Consequently I shall argue that postmodernism at its best might be seen as self-critical—a sceptical, ironic, but nevertheless unrelenting—form of modernism.[3]

Because postmodernism questions meaning and form (without necessarily concerning itself with "the answers"), confusion about what postmodernism is becomes inevitable. Within the discussion about a postmodern theatre lies Artaud's notion (through Derrida) of "the closure of representation." The heart of a cruel and impossible theatre, Artaud/Derrida feels "theatrical art should be the primordial and privileged site of this destruction of imitation." The theatre "is not a representation. It is life itself, in the extent to which life is unrepresentable."[4] This not only seems to be impossible, but it begs the question, "Isn't this what drove Artaud mad?" But a questioning of the nature of representation, as maddening as it may be, is one of the primary interests of the postmodernist.

What does the postmodernist mean when he speaks of representation? Derrida illustrates representation through an example from everyday life:

> If I read, if I hear on the radio that the diplomatic or parliamentary representatives of some country have been received by the Chief of State, that representatives of striking workers or the parents of schoolchildren have gone to the Ministry in a delegation, if I read in the paper that this evening there will be a representation of some play, or that such and such a painting represents this or that, etc., I understand without the least equivocation and I do not put my head in my hands to take in what it means.[5]

Though one may argue that this definition does not save one from the inevitable putting-one's-head-in-one's-hands, it does help

us understand that representation "is founded on the inability of the

two somethings" (in the case of this thesis, the Shakespearean

playscript and the performance) "to be the same, to be identical.

It is the moment between the two entities, the presence and the

representation, which allows us to talk of presence and

representation."[6]

The postmodernist sees this difference (Derrida's _différance_)

as being both unreconcilable and problematic. But this difference is

the conflict at the heart of being. The modernist assumes a closed

relationship between the present playscript and a performance

representation completely dependent upon it; the postmodernist

assumes an open-ended, co-parasitical relationship between them.

This disparity creates questions about the accessability of meaning

in speech. In the postmodern theatre, words, far from being helpful

guides to fixed meanings, become "another villain of the piece, a

blood relation of mimesis."[7] Because of this, the postmodernist

may feel that

> the world is becoming an unlimited system of texts where
> meaning is no longer fixed by the spacing between presence
> and representation, a distance which signals the secondary,
> limited, dependent nature of representation. That represent-
> ation is no longer secondary and that a "standing in for," a
> "sending" now exists in a space which no longer exists in the
> sense that it is now everywhere does not mean that meaning no
> longer exists but rather that there is no fixity of meaning as
> that term had come to be understood in the Classical and
> modern epistemes.[8]

The absence of fixed meanings creates a fracture between the

present text and the representation of performance. This fracture

represents the difference between words and their connotations,

between the seeming presence of meaning and the ghosts that chase

after it. This difference between the literal and the "litterol" is "the border, the fracture, the site on which the postmodern episteme is constituted, where presence and representation, order and chaos, meaning and non-meaning, call each other into being whilst simultaneously challenging that being. This is the space of writing."[9] To the postmodern director, it is the space of performance as well.

There never was an empty space; the audience and I entered one already inhabited. Darkness was more present than light. A body, half-buried, lay face-down and undisturbed in a deep area filled with an unrecognizable black ashy substance. Strange bird-like sounds, human cries, and the grunts and barks of animals emanated from places invisible, but very close by.

"What is that dark, musty smell in the air?" I wondered. "What is that ashy stuff that seems to spill everywhere. What place is this supposed to be?"

Suddenly, a long, piercing hawk cry broke from the left section of the audience. Several people were twisting around to see from whence the cry came. There, between the rows of people, stood a short frizzy-haired woman, dressed in a black form-fitting suit. Feathers were braided into her hair; metallic buttons and clips held loose black veils to the garment; a long polished antler was clutched in an outstretched hand. Another piercing animal-like cry ripped from this tiny form, causing a section of the audience to bolt upright in their seats. Immediately, however, the bird-like, woman-like creature fell to emitting strange, bubbling, chirping sounds as she crouched and crawled and swooped through the rows of people.

"Nothing separates the stage from the audience," I thought. "Even the rows of audience seats fail as barriers. It feels a bit uncomfortable and odd to have the actors so close. Why don't they just start the play?"

A second creature had entered (or had she been there all along?) and was squatting over a small mound of the black, ashy substance, chattering to herself with unintelligible, squawky sounds. Blueish-black liquid-like substances hung from the black form of her costume; her hair was wet and glistening; her painted, webbed hands dug eagerly into the ashy substance, piling it into an ever-increasing mound. An audience member, seeking his seat without noticing the nearby creature, accidently brushed against the edge of the space. The creature ceased all activity, watching the audience member intently. Once seated, the audience member noticed that the attention of the creature (and of the watching audience) was on him. After a moment of pause, the creature rose up to face him, released a deep, croaking belch, then rolled over laughing and holding her stomach.

"Has the play begun already?" I wondered, "Or is this some kind of a pre-show? How does one know when a play begins?"

I jumped as a hand rested suddenly on my knee. A third
creature knelt beside my seat stretching out a blackened, bony claw.
This creature had a wild shock of hair, clumps of fur dangled from
her black body costume, a chain of metal hoops encircled her head. I
looked at her, wondering why she had touched me. As I wondered, she
reached out again--tentatively, almost wolf-like--until her fingers
rested on the stub of a candy bar that I held in my lap. "Do you
want some?" I asked, feeling amused and slightly embarrassed. The
creature licked her lips, but withdrew her hand quickly. I broke of
a piece of the candy and offered it to her. She slowly began to
extend her hand, until she grabbed the candy into her mouth greedily.
I laughed and, feeling a bit aggressive, added, "You're welcome."
The creature stopped eating, looked at me with glassy eyes, and
quietly hissed like a cat.

"What are these creatures supposed to be?" I wondered. "Are
they animal? human? supernatural? I don't know. But I do know they
are sentient, unpredictable, and occasionally unnerving."

A bird cry brought the audience to full attention; the
feathered creature had discovered the half-buried body. The three
creatures gathered about him, whispering unintelligibly to one
another, digging him free from the black substance and turning him
over. Then they joined hands, breathing deeply, making strange,
cacophonous noises, until they rose, extended, with an orgiastic cry.
Falling back, panting from exhaustion, the three creatures looked at
one another, pleased, as we noticed that the once-dead body had begun
to breathe and groan.

> "When shall we three meet againe?
> In Thunder, Lightning, or in Raine?"[1]

CHAPTER 1

QUESTIONS RAISED BY A MODERNIST SHAKESPEARE

The modernist director of Shakespeare's playscripts, through
the influence of New Criticism, often feels that the "meaning" of the
script is somehow inherent in the script. There is a sense in which
the modernist feels that if he can only find the "hidden key" in the
script, the "true" meaning of the play's words, action, and themes
can be verified, codified, and presented. Because of this, the
modernist often first looks to Shakespeare's original sources and
influences for fixed meanings. Emphasis is placed on an
understanding and use of Shakespeare's influences: textual sources,
contemporary habits and mores, biographical information, and
Elizabethan staging. This approach contains both constructive and
destructive aspects. Often, directors (modernist or otherwise)--with
a strong disdain for "homework"--simply transfer the ideas and forms
from Shakespeare's time into present production, creating a kind of
museum piece. Shakespeare festivals across North America are the
primary places where such museum pieces can be viewed. Period
costuming, Elizabethan staging, and fidelity to a text (be it the
Folio of 1623 or some preferred quarto) are central elements in this
approach. Buzzwords such as "faithful" and "accurate" are employed
freely, as if an understanding of Shakespeare's time and influences
can (and should) be absolutely known and duplicated. Certainly, there

is value in experiencing a piece of theatre that attempts to recreate
its original plasticity, but to assume that this experience is
somehow "the true meaning of the play" is a bit presumptuous.

The Problem of Audience Expectation

Most directors are fully aware that Shakespearean productions
bring about a certain amount of audience expectation. The modernist
director of Shakespeare may often feel trapped by them. These
expectations arise, mainly, from two sources: the repetitive nature
of theatre and the advent of cinema. The director must decide
whether these expectations merit fulfillment or demolition.

Three hundred years of Shakespearean performance have encrusted
Macbeth with enormous audience expectations. These may change subtly
with passing innovations. They often categorize certain ideas into
clichés, thereby removing the power of the ideas. Perhaps one good
example of a type of audience expectation will come through a
conversation overheard in Portland Oregon between a director and his
cast. "What do you plan on doing with the show?" asked one cast
member. "Well, put your minds to rest," the director responded, "we
will not do the rag-and-bones production, but will probably use the
fascist silhouette." Audiences seem to expect a certain recognizable
format, and these format expectations have even categorized
themselves nicely into short, phraseable concepts. To see how far
this kind of expectation-oriented thought can be carried, read Marvin
Rosenberg's The Masks of Macbeth in which the playscript is
thoroughly dissected and analyzed according to the various categories
of performance style throughout the history of its production.[1] In

the hands of an open-minded director, this book can lead to interesting innovations and fresh theorizing. In the hands of an unsure director, the book could provide examples of satisfying audience expectation through the repetition of history.

Through three hundred years of repetition, certain passages of Shakespeare (and certainly of Macbeth) are so familiar that they set up a kind of expectation through their inevitability. When those famous passages arise, the audience becomes intensely aware of the language and style, often mentally following along with the actor. The director has three choices: meet the expectation by framing the speech, thereby creating a self-awareness of the text that breaks down representation and jars the expectation; avoid the expectation through underplaying; or create a new context in which to throw the speech, thereby placing it on unexpected ground. In the UM Production, Macbeth's famous "Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow" speech (5.5.21-32) was separated by strong, motionless pauses. When the actor spoke the speech, it was directly to the audience with minimal emotions, as if the actor had momentarily stepped out of the role and discovered the existential nature of power, life and (perhaps, if the play's more post-modern aspects came through) theatrical performance itself. This was an example of meeting the expectation by framing. An example of underplaying may best be found in the "I have liv'd long enough" speech (5.3.27-33), which was spoken underneath a flurry of mindless activity as Macbeth roamed the stage, looking out imaginary windows, mussing with his hair and weapons. This is perhaps the most dangerous method of dealing with

expectation, for the director runs the risk of the audience losing an important piece of action. It should be used with discretion. Two examples will serve for the contextual placing of famous speeches: the "Come you Spirits,/ that tend on mortall thoughts" speech of Lady Macbeth (1.5.45-55), and the "Is this a Dagger,/ which I see before me" speech of Macbeth (2.1.46-78). The first speech was performed in the act of a ritualistic attempt at possession. Lady Macbeth spoke the speech with the aid of the Weird Sisters, shuddering as the possessing spirits entered her body and left. The mood was orgiastic and conveyed a mood of taboo. The groans and calls of the Sisters added to the context of expectancy and fear. The second speech was again aided by the present Weird Sisters. In the presentation of a true knife, created by the magic of the Weird Sisters through the use of the rubber substance and lighting effects, Macbeth was able to be tormented by effects made visual to the audience as well as Macbeth's "heat oppressed brain." The ability to see the witchery performed on Macbeth, placed his speech in a new context and challenged the expectations of the audience.

The other source for audience expectations is the accessability and permanence of film and videotape. The abundance of filmed versions of Macbeth is enough to fill the playgoer's mind with plenty of "ways it should be done."[2] Perhaps the most influential films of Shakespeare's playscripts were the World War II era films by Laurence Olivier. These so successfully established an Elizabethan-oriented, Freudian, psychologically realistic Shakespeare, that most modern playgoers (whether they have seen the

films or not) have come to expect Shakespeare to be performed in that fashion. The danger in this expectation lies not only in the obvious difference between the art (and versatility) of cinema and the live theatre, but also in its underlying notion that Shakespeare can only be done well in one way. The history of Shakespearean performance has proven the flexibility and vitality of Shakespeare's art; directors need not feel intimidated by the permanence or the seeming veracity of the cinema. The power and veracity of the theatre is in its impermanence; it's ability to be Blau's "space of amortization."[3] Theatre becomes the place where presence is consumed by the act of representation, until nothing remains but the tracings of memory.

Dissatisfaction with Psychological Realism

Shakespeare, as a playwright, was a stranger to psychological realism. His playscripts are poetic and mythic, and his plots veer from our daily sense of reality more often than not. Yet in spite of this, directors rarely place these plays outside the context of pictorial, psychological realism. The reason for this is complex: the Industrial Revolution, with its demoralization and its focus on the commonplace, limited the ability of the common person to believe in myth and poetry; the advent of film (as noted above); the apparent success of psychology to explain human behavior; and, most directly, the misunderstanding and misuse of the acting theories of Constantin Stanislavsky.

Stanislavsky's theories on the psycho-physicalization of character through biography and objective analysis created a

revolution in the acting community.[4] The main benefit to his "system" was the ability to study a character scientifically and create that character's life with realistic clarity. The hidden deficit was the ability of the "system" to become reductionist in thought. Taken too far (as it often is, particularly in the United States), Stanislavsky's ideas can lead to a pictorial naturalism that bores in its self-absorption and is inadequate to portray the mythic or the poetic stature of Shakespeare's playscripts. It can also lead to a false sensation of discovering the closed meaning of the character. In order for Stanislavsky's theories to work in Shakespeare, the actor and director must remember the reality of the production is the reality of the playscript, not necessarily the realities of everyday, modern life. In an era when reality as a concept is becoming much more flexible and complex, even in the sciences, one wonders at the theatre's hesitation to experiment with the nature of theatrical reality.

Macbeth offers wonderful opportunities to stretch beyond the bounds of pictorial, psychological realism. The supernatural quality of the Weird Sisters and the ghost of Banquo challenges modern assumptions about the nature of reality and the consequences of action. In the UM Production, the haunting of Macbeth became a physical event, not only by the presence of the Banquet Banquo, but by the recurring presences of the ghosts of Duncan, Banquo, Lady Macduff, Macduff's son, and the other dead throughout the play. The continual deconstruction of the "fourth wall" through soliloquy and physical presence aided the breaking down of the naturalistic

qualities of the play, allowing the audience to enjoy a nightmarish form of reality, and thereby sense the mythic nature of the play.

The three creatures hide behind trees and below the lip of the stage and, occasionally, even amongst the audience. They are always present; they never leave the space of the theatre. The boundaries between "us" and "them" are no longer clearly delineated. The creatures laugh, rolling about, mocking the sexual act. They hear sounds and see movement that we don't perceive. They snarl threats like wolves stalking their prey.

    "Who are these creatures?" I wonder. "Are they evil or good? And what on earth will they do next?"

<u>All</u>. The weyward Sisters, hand in hand,
Posters of the Sea and Land,
Thus doe goe, about, about,
Thrice to thine, and thrice to mine,
And thrice againe, to make up nine.
Peace, the Charme's wound up.
<u>Macb</u>. So foule and faire a day I have not seene.

CHAPTER 2

CONCERNS OF A POSTMODERN SHAKESPEARE

The postmodern director approaching a Shakespearean playscript
questions the meanings of the script (with full awareness of the
problem of open-ended language), questions the form of the script and
the form of performance, and seeks to find selvedges that will keep
the knitted fabric of performance from raveling.

The advent of the theatre director is only a century old, and
in that century, the function and authority of the director has been
a focal point of controversy. Both practitioners and theorists argue
everything from the creative/interpretive aspects of directing to the
need for directors in the theatre at all. The debate over the role
of the director centers around the argument between those who see
directing as a creative process and those who see directing as an
interpretive process. Alexander Dean, in his posthumous first
edition of Fundamentals of Play Direction, sees the role of the
director clearly as that of interpreter. Directors, to Dean, "do not
produce their artistic expression out of the void but have the
already created product to interpret."[1] Therefore, the director
becomes a kind of secondary artist to the primary playwright. In the
remaining editions of Dean's books, jointly authored by Lawrence
Carra, exceptions are made for the notion of a creative director.
Citing Grotowski, Carra allows that "in the experimental groups in

any of the larger theatre centers the director may function as
co-creator with the actors who are conceiving their own subject
matter out of improvisational explorations."[2] In both cases, the
root argument focuses on authorial vs. directorial supremacy. If the
author has provided primary material, he remains sole proprietor of
the creative function. If not, the director is allowed, by forfeit,
to sneak some of the creative function for himself.

Of course, all of this is dependent upon the notion that an
author and his text can actually have authority in the production of
playscripts. To the postmodernist, this notion is highly
problematic, especially with dead authors like William Shakespeare.
The problem lies in the idea that the intentions of a playwright can
be known. The postmodernist sees a strong distinction between
dramatic literature and dramatic performance, and it is within this
distinction that the playwright's intentions become, in a way,
unimportant. The playscript becomes a residue, as it were, of the
playwright's art; but most playwrights (and certainly Shakespeare)
understood that the script was a piece of art that found its
fulfillment only in its performance. The limitations of language
restrain the playwright from revealing exact performance intentions,
even in the body of the script. Even with playwrights (such as
Miller and O'Neill) who attempt to reveal their intentions for the
production of their scripts, problems arise in the ambiguity of
language. Arthur Miller wants Willy Loman to be "dressed
quietly."[3] Eugene O'Neill intends the men in The Hairy Ape to have
"small, fierce, resentful eyes."[4] Most practitioners of drama will

recognize that language is, by nature, too open-ended and general to give the director any definitive ideas of a playwright's intentions.

Because of this problem, the director becomes a creative artist by providing "sites" of understanding that attempt to "finish" the art form. The author's intentions for production (whether they can be known or not) ultimately become unimportant, because the production (like the playscript) cannot contain closed, definitive meanings for the director to pursue. This does not devalue the function of the playscript or its author. The playscript is the foundation of the incomplete art form, and the playwright, as the inventor of the piece, is a creative artist as well. But the director (and the actors and designers) work with the author to create the final, completed art form which is the play performance. In performing a creative function, the postmodern director can thoroughly question meanings within the playscript without being fearful of infidelity to the playwright's assumed intentions.

The Authority of the Director

If the director and the playwright serve as co-creators of the production, who has the ultimate authority? The question can only be answered by following the functions of the different creators. The playwright provides the verbal language of the production. The director (with the help of the actors and designers) provides the artistic body from which that language proceeds. This artistic body includes the plastic elements of theatre as well as other vehicles for the transmission of the playscript's ideas (sub-text, mood, core, etc.). With this in mind, the director is given authority by nature

of chronology, since, unlike the playwright, the director is present during the creation of the production.[5] This allows the director a certain amount of freedom of expression and a certain amount of responsibility for the outcome.

This also allows the postmodern director to question the form of the playscript and the form of performance. Certainly, the director will need to decide for himself when the questioning of the playscript's form becomes an abandonment of the playscript itself (and whether or not it's important to him). Artaud suggested that we need "no more masterpieces."[6] Of course, the postmodernist senses that he is half-correct. Viewing a playscript as a reverent, static, closed text leads to excruciating theatrical death. But Shakespeare's "masterpieces" can be marvellous sites for contemporary thought and experience. The postmodern director explores, with a certain amount of freedom, the intercourses between the past (present) text and the contemporary (present) performance.

There are similarities and dissimilarities between this idea and auteur theory. Auteur theory stems from the cinema and makes the argument that the director is the primary creative force in the production--that the director is the real author of the film. The theatre auteur begins by providing a new script from which to create sites for plasticity. The theatre, the postmodernist assumes that the playwright's work is open-ended by nature, and the director, in creating sites for the work to resonate, becomes one of several creative forces in the production. The playwright has provided a playscript from which the director proceeds with sites for plas-

ticity; the actors and designers also create sites with the director, and ultimately their work becomes the literal sites of production. The director, therefore, has a strong creative function (but not the sole creative function), and can share the primacy, at certain times, with the other creative artists.

In a sense, because of the amount of creative work the director and others add to the finished art form, all productions can be considered adaptations. The playscript is adapted into physical, temporal form by the act of production. Each act of production changes, because of variations caused by time and situation, and therefore becomes a new adaptation every time it occurs. Therefore, the notion of fidelity to an author's intentions seems absurd in light of the director's function and the adaptive nature of production.

<div align="center">Seeking Selvedges</div>

With the open-ended nature of Shakespearean playscripts and the freedom of a director no longer tied down by playwright expectations, the question becomes, "What keeps the performance from exploding into a chaotic, confusing mess?" The postmodern director looks for tacking-down places, sutures with which to hold together the fracture created between text and performance. Herbert Blau calls these tacking-down places, "selvedges."[7] Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary describes selvedge:

> **selvage** or **selvedge** /'sel-vij/ n [ME selvage, prob. fr. MFlem selvegge, fr. selv self + egge edge] **1 a:** the edge on either side of a woven or flat-knitted fabric so finished as to prevent raveling . . . **2 b:** the edge plate of a lock through which the bolt is projected.

In the theatre, the selvedge is the parts of the production which function as threads of continuity holding the fabric of the performance together. These selvedges will be explored in the following chapters. Selvedges allow the production to explore open-ended language, non-fixed meanings, and other ambiguities of performance without sinking into chaos and confusion.

Probably the strongest, most evident selvedge used in the UM Production of Macbeth was the ambiguous, mysterious, ever-present Weird Sisters. In all of Shakespeare's dramatic literature, these three characters are, arguably, the most elusive and contradictory. The dramatis personae refers to these creatures as "Three Witches," and that designation and identity has been assumed ever since. Of course, this list of characters was probably added by the editors of the Folio in 1623, and may not be part of the original playscript at all. Without the interpolations by Thomas Middleton (discussed in Chapter 5) and the line identifications probably inserted by the editors, there is only one reference to these creatures as witches:

    1. A Saylors Wife had Chestnuts in her Lappe,
    And mouncht, & mouncht, and mouncht:
    Give me, quoth I.
    Aroynt thee, Witch, the rumpe-fed Ronyon cryes.
                                        (1.3.6-9)

In most other occasions of address, they are referred to as the Weyward (or Weird) Sisters. If the director begins by throwing out assumptions of categorical identity (and the postmodernist usually does), he must wonder about this identification and its eventual presentation. Simply looking at these characters's actions, one cannot assume that the identification of "witches" will do. At

the least, they seem to require a redefinition of our notion of witches and witchery. These characters consistently prophesy the future accurately and honestly (2.1.29-30; 5.8.25-28); they have power over weather and other natural events (1.3.14-17, 27-28; 4.1.55-65); they have the ability to disappear and to ride on the air (1.1.15; 1.3.36, 84-88; 1.5.5-6; 4.1.165); their allegiances are ambiguous and fickle (1.1.8; 4.1.121-131); they "looke not like th'Inhabitants o'th'Earth" (1.3.45); "they have more in them, than mortall knowledge" (1.5.4-5).

To gain a fuller understanding of the nature of these characters, Shakespeare's sources may prove helpful. Several of the sources for Macbeth may have been Vertumnus Sive Annus Recurrens, by Matthew Gwinn (recited in English before King James on 27 August 1605 and probably known by Shakespeare); A Continuance of Albions England, by William Warner (originally published in 1586, revised in 1606); and most certainly, The Chronicles of England, Scotlande, and Ireland, by Raphael Holinshed (a 1587 history based on Hector Boece's Scotorum Historiae).[8] Gwinn's poem/sketch uses three different terms to describe these characters: Sibyls, the fatal Sisters, and Fates. All of these names point to the mythological sisters of Greek legend who spin the threads of fate. Warner's history employs two terms: Fairies and Weird-Elfes. Holinshed, Shakespeare's primary source, stretches into more indiginous mythological territory. He introduces them as "three women in strange and wild apparell, resembling creatures of elder world." He concludes their appearance to Macbeth and Banquo with the following: "The common opinion was,

that these women were either the wierd sisters, that is (as ye would say) the goddesses of destinie, or else some nymphs or feiries." In Shakespeare's time, fairy-lore, the Fates, and witchcraft had common sources, and often the boundaries between these ideas were quite blurred. K.M. Briggs in The Fairies in Tradition and Literature points to the fact that "from the earliest times fairies and enchantresses were intermingled." Particularly in the times of witch trials, fairies, ghosts, and those who saw otherwise unseen things "were liable to suspicion as witches."[9] Fairy-lore, which was much more intricate than mere fairy tales, was a universal part of the English working class psyche. Could Shakespeare have had a more complex creature in mind when he created the Weird Sisters?

The definitive study of the fairy-lore of the British Isles is W.Y. Evans-Wentz's classic, The Fairy Faith in Celtic Countries. A social anthropologist, Evan-Wentz made a fully documented examination of the fairy faith throughout Wales, Scotland, Ireland, and Brittany. What he found was a centuries-old system of folklore and tradition stemming from ancient religious beliefs intermingled with animistic and Christian traditions. The peasant tradition believed "in a spiritual realm inhabited by spiritual beings from prehistoric times until now."[10] Fairy creatures, far from the images passed to the modern psyche through the Brothers Grimm and Walt Disney, are independent beings, neither benevolent nor malevolent to man, imbued with supernatural powers often tied to nature. They have the ability to cross dimensional boundaries, thereby seeming to appear and disappear; they are extremely mischievous, often inflicting serious

harm unintentionally; they have the powers of prophesy; they can change shape and appear at one moment beautiful, at another moment frightening; they can be approached on physical levels, but it rarely seems wise; they have the ability to affect weather and other natural phenomena.

An investigation of the playscript reveals that this more complex characterization of supernatural fairy-like beings (as opposed to the cliché evil witches) strengthens their role as characters of influence and allows the moral ambiguity necessary to further the dramatic action. The Weird Sisters, as fairy-like creatures, are able to mischievously play with Macbeth's ambitions, without causing him to commit evil (which is important to Macbeth's action--that he commit the evil of his own free will). In true fairy form, the Weird Sisters tie themselves to elemental beings through the use of the familiars: Graymalkin, the cat, represents earth; Paddock, the frog, represents water; and Harpy, the bird/woman, represents air (1.1.13-14; 4.1.5).

In the UM Production, the Weird Sisters freely roamed the theatre environment before and during the show. The constant presence of morally ambiguous creatures allowed a sort of witchery in an almost choral manner. The Weird Sisters would watch the action; sometimes taking on human identities as messengers, servants, and murderers; mischievously playing with the flow of historical action; interacting with the audience in an almost perpetual aside. They became ever-present mood makers, constantly reminding the modern audience of the destablization of the present world. Their actions

could sometimes prove benevolent: at the opening of the performance, Angus lies dead upon the ground; the Sisters bring him back to life, and he performs the role of the bleeding sergeant; one of the Sisters allows Fleance to escape being murdered, then lies about it to the others; the Sisters steal the Macduff daughter, changeling-style, and train her to become one of them. Their actions sometimes could prove malevolent: the provision of the "dagger of the mind;" the murder of Banquo and the Macduff family; the hint, in the end, of the future temptation of Fleance toward the crown.

The Weird Sisters, though ambiguous and morally indistinct, left the audience with the continual reminder of the instable, haunting quality of the play. They became the nightmarish selvedge, continually keeping the context in view and in control. Physical representatives of the metaphysical reality, the Weird Sisters provided enough unity to keep the audience involved. This is how selvedge can work in a postmodern Shakespearean playscript.

Lady.   Come you Spirits,
That tend on mortall thoughts, unsex me here,
And fill me from the Crowne to the Toe, top-full
Of direst Crueltie.

    I watch as the Three Sisters slowly enter, surrounding Lady
Macbeth. They appear at times afraid, at times eager. "Are they the
evil spirits that tend on mortal flesh?" I wonder. "Or are they
simply spiritual voyeurs?" They shiver, tossing arms and hair
towards Lady Macbeth, as if giving her some kind of energy or focus.
Lady Macbeth quakes, writhing in horror; she is being possessed, and
it's a little frightening. "Are the Sisters doors to another kind of
reality?" One thing I know: they are both scary and fun to watch.

CHAPTER 3

THE SELVEDGE OF STRUCTURE

Shakespeare probably wrote Macbeth around 1606, before Antony

and Cleopatra and after King Lear.[1] Yet the play contains both

modern and post-modern elements. Jan Kott's seminal book,

Shakespeare Our Contemporary, contains strong arguments toward a

modern Macbeth. Kott proposes that history is a cruel, cyclical

"Grand Mechanism" which ultimately is meaningless. This Mechanism,

in Macbeth, is replaced by the metaphor of brutal nightmare. Murder

becomes the only thematic element: "History has been reduced to its

simplest form, to one image and one division: those who kill and

those who are killed."[2] Death and nightmare tumble forward as

Macbeth becomes more and more a stranger to himself. In the end,

Macbeth has only an absurd contempt for life, since the only killing

that can stop the killing is his own.

Marxist critics read Macbeth in social/political contexts. The

Weird Sisters are "heroines" who cause Macbeth and his "bourgeois

individualist" wife to challenge the heirarchical social order. The

play is a "fruitful darkness" and the Macbeths resemble Marx's notion

of the bourgeoise "entangled in its own excess."[3]

Macbeth addresses postmodern questions of the fracture of

meaning and the illusive nature of representation. The meaning of

death and life becomes absurd in the light of the ghost at the

banquet table. And ultimately, in one of the strongest postmodern statements in literature, Macbeth discovers the agony of the Absent:

> Macb. She should have dy'de heereafter;
> There would have beene a time for such a word:
> To morrow, and to morrow, and to morrow,
> Creepes in this petty pace from day to day,
> To the last Syllable of Recorded time:
> And all our yesterdays, have lighted Fooles
> The way to dusty death. Out, out, breefe Candle,
> Life's but a walking Shadow, a poore Player,
> That struts and frets his houre upon the Stage,
> And then is heard no more. It is a Tale
> Told by an Ideot, full of sound and fury
> Signifying nothing.
>   (5.5.21-32)

The Structure of Action

The main structural components of dramatic action are the protagonist and his forwarding action, the antagonist and his opposing action, the character of influence and his influential action, the crisis moment, and the climax of the play. Variations on the interpretation of these components will lead to strong differences in productions. The postmodern director can use these components as threads of selvedge which stitch a line, a stability amidst the open-ended performance. These components are not "keys to meaning" in the modernist sense, rather they provide tacking-down places to keep the audience from confusion. For this reason, several strong choices about the selvedge value (let alone the identity) of each component can exist within a playscript, particularly one with an ambiguous structure. Macbeth seems to fall into the category of plays with ambiguous structures, reasons for which will be explored more thoroughly in Chapter 5. For this reason, the following analysis/selvedge choice becomes one answer to several a director can

make for <u>Macbeth</u>.

<p style="text-align:center">The Protagonist and Forwarding Action</p>

In <u>Macbeth</u>, the protagonist of the play, the character that thrusts the play toward its conclusion, seems evident. Macbeth is the strongest candidate. Some directors and critics argue for a double protagonist--Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. But in light of the disintegration of the relationship and action between the two characters as the play progresses, this choice appears to have its weaknesses. Macbeth's nearly constant presence, his repetitive use of soliloquy, and his leadership in the thematic structure of the play points to his protagonism.

The nature of Macbeth's forwarding action is not quite so easily settled. Each different context and thematic focus will redirect the forwarding action and the selvedge quality of the protagonist. The historicist may see his action as the struggle of an ambitious subject against the legitimacy of the royal line. The feminist may see his action as a struggle against his surrounding definitions of masculinity in his attempt to retain patriarchal control. The postmodernist may see his action as the struggle against the inevitable destruction of meaning.

The UM Production focused upon a modification of the postmodernist thesis. Macbeth chooses to actuate his desire for absolute power, power full of temporal and spiritual meaning. Upon the discovery of his receipt of the title Thane of Cawdor, Macbeth at first decides to allow this desire to be fulfilled without actuating it himself: "If Chance will have me King, / Why Chance may Crowne

me, / Without my stirre" (1.3.160-162) and "Come what come may, /
Time, and the Houre, runs through the roughest Day" (166-167). Yet
the next scene sees Malcolm crowned the heir to the throne as the
Prince of Cumberland. This causes Macbeth to rethink his inactivity
and decide to act: "The Prince of Cumberland: that is a step, / On
which I must fall downe, or else o're-leape, / For in my way it lyes"
(1.4.60-62). He activates this desire for absolute power by the
murder of Duncan. He furthers this quest by the murder of Banquo and
the attempted murder of Fleance: "To be thus, is nothing, but to be
safely thus: / Our feares in Banquo sticke deepe" (3.5.59-60). To
make his power absolute, however, requires more death: Lady Macduff
and children (in an attempt at Macduff's life) and any others who
stand in his way ("Send out moe Horses, skirre the Country round. /
Hang those that talke of Feare," 5.3.43-44). The play ends with the
defeat of the protagonist's intentions for absolute power.

The Antagonist and Opposing Action

The opposition to this kind of action can be tricky to analyze.
Structurally, the antagonist is not as clearly delineated as the
protagonist. The director can fall into any number of traps in his
search for the answer. First, the director can make the mistake of
choosing a conceptual (non-character) antagonist, such as "guilt."
These kinds of approaches have the immediate appeal of thematic
clarity and seem to fit the theatre's present penchant for
psychological truth. But when the director seeks to put this kind of
non-physical action on stage, he finds the action static and
didactic. Another trap into which the director may fall is the use

of a character who does not maintain the antagonism throughout the entire play. Duncan is the first antagonistic element, but he is dead by the end of Act 2. Macduff is clearly antagonistic to Macbeth's desire for absolute power, but he does not begin this antagonism until 4.3. This leaves an unopposed action through the greater part of the play, which again leads to frustration.

A careful analysis of the playscript leads to the conclusion that the structure of the antagonism in Macbeth may be weak and will need repairing by the director. The UM Production chose the likeliest candidate for a continual antagonism, Malcolm, and used him to repair structural weaknesses through his use of agents. His opposing action was the quest to gain absolute power for himself.

In order to bolster Malcolm's antagonism, it became necessary to interpret Duncan as a weak king whose power really lies in the leading of Malcolm. The actor chosen to portray Malcolm was similar in age to Macbeth, rather than being an ineffectual child. The production made Malcolm's manipulation of his father clear from the beginning. He led the doddering Duncan around, whispering ideas into his ear. The playscript bolstered this interpretation by Malcolm's direction of the sergeant and his knowledge (much more than the king's) of the action of the war. Malcolm seems to plant every seed of Duncan's action--including the awarding of Macbeth with the title, Thane of Cawdor.

To further strengthen Malcolm's position as antagonist, the character of Donalbain was eradicated. This was not difficult since the character had only three lines, none of which could not be easily

redesigned for Malcolm. When Duncan's body was discovered (2.3.), Malcolm entered the scene last, behind every other member of the scene. The group was utterly silent as he entered. Malcolm seemed to know what had happened. He walked in a slow circle, eyes focused upon Macbeth, who countered his move, until he reached the door to Duncan's room. There he paused, looking toward the door, and asked Macbeth, almost defiantly, "What is amisse?" This is a clear indication of the antagonist's realization of the conflict. The two short discourses between Donalbain and Malcolm became a conflicted soliloquy directed to the audience:

> Malc. Why do I hold my tongue,
> That most may claim this argument mine own?
> Yet what should be spoken here, where fate,
> Hid in an augur hole, may rush and seize me?
> I'll away. My tears are not yet brewed.
> Nor my strong sorrow upon the foot of motion.
> (2.3.145-151)

> Malc. What will I do? Not consort with them;
> To show an unfelt sorrow is an office
> Which the false man does easy. I'll to England.
> Where I am, there's daggers in men's smiles;
> The near in blood, the nearer bloody.
> This murderous shaft that's shot
> Hath not yet lighted, and my safest way
> Is to avoid the aim.
> (2.3.167-181)

Malcolm furthers his active antagonism in 4.3 with his manipulation of Macduff and the other lords to action. Again, to strengthen Malcolm's antagonism (and because the material finds its value only in Shakespeare's political context), the English lords, including Siward and Young Siward, were referred to, but never seen. This left Malcolm the clear leader of the revolt against Macbeth, using Macduff as the agent of that antagonism. The antagonist

appeared to succeed in his opposing action when Macduff and the lords bowed to him, calling him "King of Scotland" (5.8.77-78). But this apparent victory was an illusion, as will be seen in Chapter 3.

Between 2.3 and 4.3, Malcolm continued his antagonism through the use of an agent. Banquo becomes an agent of Malcolm's opposition through siding with him against Macbeth: "Thou hast it now, King, Cawdor, Glamis, all, / As the weyard Women promis'd, and I feare / Thou playd'st most fowly for't" (3.1). Banquo was among the first to leave the court of King Macbeth, and was killed in the process. Banquo's ghost continues the antagonism until Macduff's agency is procurred by the murder of his family and the prodding of Malcolm.

The Character of Influence and Influential Action

A strong character of influence should have a story line outside the main protagonist-antagonist struggle until the point of crisis, when the character's separate story line crosses that struggle and influences its progression. There are several poss ibilities, but one good candidate for this role is the Weird Sisters. The UM Production strongly emphasized the independent nature and loyalties of the Weird Sisters through their ambivalence toward char- acters and the amibiguous quality of their motives. The Weird Sisters, through these qualities, became a strong selvedge element through the play. A discussion about the production's treatment of the Sisters is provided above in Chapter 2.

The Sisters remained outside the influence of the action throughout the first part of the play, though they were constantly present. The playscript supports this distance in 1.3, where a

careful reading will reveal that the Sisters did not seek to influence Macbeth to action. They merely (for whatever private motives) informed him of the prophesy. They did not tempt Macbeth; Macbeth acted (as pointed out in the discussion of the protagonist) out of his own volition, and clearly away from the prophesy of the Weird Sisters.

At the crisis of the play, the Weird Sisters enter the protagonist-antagonist struggle with prophesies that influence Macbeth and lead to a point of no return.

There seems to be one of the Sisters who enjoys doing things that we would call "evil." She snarls, moving with the jerky, angular motions of a wolf. Pieces of fur hang from her black costume. "The program says her name is DeAnne Kemp," I think to myself. "She's really wicked--or at least, the character is. I wonder what she's like in real life?" The evil sister has crawled behind Macbeth as he waves away the servant--played by the more likeable, human sister (Colleen Campbell, the program would say; but I don't want to look now). The evil sister slowly pours out a small pile of the black substance. As she hisses, cat-like, upon the pile, it appears to glow with light. Macbeth turns, seeing the substance; he does not see the sister leering at him.

    Macb. Is this a Dagger, which I see before me,
    The Handle toward my Hand? Come, let me clutch thee.

CHAPTER 4

THE SELVEDGE OF THEME

Though the active conflict of <u>Macbeth</u> is seen through the protagonist-antagonist struggle recorded above, strong conceptual structure (including a form of thematic conflict) can serve as selvedge lines for the performance. The protagonist's forwarding action is resisted, thematically, by the meaningless nature of absolute power. Even as Macbeth sheds blood to obtain power, more blood becomes necessary: "I am in blood / Stept in so farre, that should I wade no more, / Returning were as tedious as go ore" (3.4.167-169). Death and life become meaningless concepts: "Life's but a walking Shadow" (5.5.28). Life, when all is tallied, signifies nothing; the attainment of power is hollow and inconsequential.

In the UM Production, this existential theme was physicalized through the characterization of Malcolm. Malcolm does not represent a return to moral order. His character (particularly as portrayed with his father in 1.2 and 1.4, and with Macduff in 4.3) is seen as equally ambitious for power, and, in the end, he resorts to the same blood spilling to obtain it. The end of the play is not a restoration of the legitimate king; it is the victory of one bloodstained warrior over another.

The Core of the Play

In the UM Production, the thematic punch of the play (the core) was the haunting of Macbeth. This haunting did not express itself in terms of mere psychological disorder, but in terms of an imbalance created by the intercourse of a metaphysical reality into the reality of Macbeth's world. The images of haunting became a strong source of selvedge (as well as a point of raveling) for the production. The Weird Sisters, through a constant presence, provided the main physicalization of the haunting. The Ghost of Banquo physically appeared in the banquet scene, not as an emanation from Macbeth's guilt-ridden mind, but as a representative from metaphysical reality. In fact, the ghosts of all Macbeth's victims appeared, veiled and gruesome, throughout the play, increasing in number, mirroring the unstable nature of the play's reality.

The metaphysical reality of the play also became plastic through the character of Lady Macbeth. The UM Production cast Lady Macbeth as a witch. This was not difficult at all, considering the character is introduced to the audience as she calls upon the "Spirits, / That tend on mortall thoughts" to fill her "from the Crowne to the Toe, top-full / of direst Crueltie" (1.5.45-59). In the production, the scene began with Lady Macbeth reading her husband's missive, not through a physical letter, but by means of a scrying bowl, raising the image of her husband speaking to her through dimensions. The calling of the spirits became a ritual of possession aided by the presence of the Weird Sisters.

The playscript makes it known that Lady Macbeth is fully aware

of the presence and prophesies of the Weird Sisters and that she believes in and prays to evil spirits; she is therefore not only in touch with metaphysical reality, but also with it's darker side. In the UM Production, Banquo's ghost visited Macbeth's banquet (3.4) to inform him of the result of his evil. Lady Macbeth made the most of the situation, reseating the guests and rebuking Macbeth. But when Banquo revisited the banquet, Lady Macbeth also saw the ghost and started with fear. From that moment to the end of the scene, Lady Macbeth no longer doubted Macbeth's word, but quickly shuffled the guests home. Macbeth responded with amazement to the coolness of his wife in the presence of such horror: "You make me strange / Even to the disposition that I owe, / When now I thinke you can behold such sights, / And keepe the naturall Rubie of your Cheekes, / When mine is blanch'd with feare" (138-142). No room for denial; Lady Macbeth was also a victim of the intruding metaphysical presence.

Of all the characters in <u>Macbeth</u>, the role of Lady Macbeth presents the strongest disparity between reading and performance. Perhaps this is due to the fragmented nature of the script (see Chapter 5). It is definitely aggravated by the disappearance of this major character from 3.4 to 5.1. Some theorists attribute this disappearance to the growing separation between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. Whether true or not, the progression of the character from a strong, manipulative woman to a hollow-souled shadow occurs completely off stage. This seemed to be the source of the disparity between reading and performance. In reading, the audience is allowed to skip between scenes, comparing and hunting for clues to this

disintegration. In performance, the audience is unable to view this progression. The UM Production addressed this problem by exploring the next probable act that the witch, Lady Macbeth, would perform. At the end of the banquet, Macbeth told his wife that he would go to the Weird Sisters to find out more information. As a witch, and as the haunted wife of a haunted man, it made sense that she would go with him. Lady Macbeth's presence in 4.1 not only served to fill the gap in her character development, it solved the problem of how to physicalize the disembodied voices. Lady Macbeth, who invited possession once before, becomes the one to whom is given the potion that possesses her of the spirits of the Masters (4.1.70-112). This sacrifice of her soul to the souls of the evil ones leaves her empty and drained of personality; Lady Macbeth has become only a shell of a person. We see the full fruits of this act in the sleepwalking scene, as Lady Macbeth is condemned to relive her moments of despair until she dies.

The Metaphor of Design

The possibilities of design concepts for Macbeth have not been exhausted. It is important that the director choose a concept with the realization that design is a form of metaphor, and that the design metaphor can be used as a kind of selvedge. A successful Shakespearean design should make plastic the primary thematic elements of the playscript. The UM Production used a concept from Shakespeare Our Contemporary: "The huge steam-roller of history has been put in motion and crushes everybody in turn. In Macbeth, however, this murder-cycle does not possess the logic of a mechanism,

but suggests rather a frighteningly growing nightmare."[1] The
thematic element, nightmare, became the foundation upon which the
design was built. In the design of the theatre environment, huge
Stonehenge-like slabs circled out above the audience. One huge slab
seemed to hang in air without any visible means of suspension. Burnt
and blackened tree trunks and large vertical mirrors rose throughout
the back section of the acting area, allowing ghosts and other beings
to appear and disappear through the darkness. The thrust of the
stage consisted of a deep black box filled with shredded black rubber
which could be flung, dug up, and moved about in other actively
visceral ways. The effect was cold, dark and brooding; elements of
the unreal commingled with realistic elements, just as they do in
nightmare.

The lighting contained moments of blotchy, unstable light (that
emphasized the erratic qualities of the reality) and moments of
blinding brightness; but on the whole, the light was extremely dim
and fragmented--the emphasis being on the darkness rather than the
light.

The costumes, makeup, and weapons began with the historical
foundation of pagan Celtic society. But instead of faithfully
reproducing these elements, they contained elements that were
exaggerated or of non-historical materials. The makeup borrowed the
painted bodies and faces of the Celtic warrior societies, allowing
the visual style of the characters to be that of nightmare, not of
reality.

Those characters not specifically of the warrior caste (Ross,

Lennox, and the Doctor) but of a more diplomatic or professional function, were often people with minor deformities. Ross proudly hid a withered arm under a fine cloak. Lennox had hints of a slight case of palsy. The Doctor had a grossly deformed leg which caused him to use a crutch.

All of these elements pointed toward the theme of nightmare and bolstered the core of the haunting. Other thematic choices may have been chosen which would carry the visual elements of Macbeth with equal clarity. But it is important for the director to find his design from the thematic elements of the play. Otherwise he runs the risk of conflicting visual/auditory elements with the spoken elements of the playscript.

The Clarifying Character

Another thematic element of the play is the clarifying character. This character may not be actively involved in the protagonist/antagonist conflict, but he reflects, through his own story, thematic similarity to the main conflict. One of the clarifying characters in Macbeth is Fleance. In the UM Production, this character was enhanced by making Fleance of an age to recognize the stature of his father and the precarious state he endured. Fleance listens to Macbeth and Banquo talk about the promises of the Weird Sisters (2.1.17-43). He is present at the discovery of Duncan's body (2.3). He hears his father's fearful musings about Macbeth (3.1.3-12). He marches with the Scottish lords as they return to rid themselves of Tyrant Macbeth (5.2,4,6).

The UM Production used the clarifying character as a kind of

selvedge throughout the play, but most particularly in two thematic moments: the crisis and the climax. In the crisis, the multitude of kings proceeding from Banquo were all portrayed by Fleance. Although the production's portrayal was weak because of inadequate rehearsal time with the young actor, the use of Fleance as a repetitive image of the kings amplifies the doubts in Macbeth's mind about the attainability of absolute power.

In the climax, the character physicalized itself most potently by the presence of Fleance, hesitating as the new king Malcolm exits the stage. Fleance was momentarily surrounded by the Weird Sisters, which seemed to reflect a variation on the scene in which Macbeth was promised the kingship. Will the son of Banquo act on the prophesies given his father, as did Macbeth? The postmodern did not seek to answer this question, but allowed the ambiguity of the future to remain.

<u>All</u>. Double, double, toyle and trouble,
Fire burn, and Cauldron bubble.

The weird creatures have gathered in a very dark place and have
been throwing odd, dark, unrecognizable bits into a pot buried in the
black substance. "Why are they doing this," I wonder. "What are
they making? A witch's brew? Something even more malignant?" The
sisters take their work seriously, occasionally rising and throwing
bits of the black substance in the air, dancing and writhing about
the space.

<u>2</u>. Coole it with a Baboones blood,
Then the Charme is firme and good.

The wierd Sisters have gathered about the bloody, messy pot
which is encrusted with the black substance. They each touch the
liquid inside the pot stealthily and touch it to their lips. They
seem to be pleased with the results. "I wonder what that stuff
tastes like?" I wonder. Off in the corner, between the blackended
trees, Macbeth and Lady Macbeth are entering. They do not hold hands
or seem otherwise interested in each other at all.

<u>2</u>. By the pricking of my Thumbes,
Something wicked this way comes.

CHAPTER 5

PREPARING THE SCRIPT

The director of Shakespearean playscripts has many different
versions of a script from which to work. Shakespeare (and most other
playwrights of his day and before) did not publish his playscripts in
his lifetime. Some of Shakespeare's scripts were surreptitiously
printed during his lifetime, but they did not have the sanction of
his approval. The first complete publication of his scripts was not
until the Folio of 1623--seven years after his death. Therefore, the
director has no certainty about the state of the playscript in terms
of Shakespeare's intentions. The Folio of 1623 was compiled and
printed by editors, drawing from old promptbooks and actors' scripts,
occasionally using any previously printed bootleg copies (called
quartos, these were also generally drawn from actors' scripts).
Since the Folio, almost every editor and critic has added his
"version" of Shakespeare, leaving the modern director with scores of
variant texts all claiming to be Macbeth, by William Shakespeare.
The director must make a choice.

In the case of the script of Macbeth, there are several
important textual considerations that scholars have pointed out. The
first is that no quarto of Macbeth exists; the first version of the
script extant is the Folio of 1623. This version, however, shows
signs of serious editing and interpolation, probably by Thomas

Middleton (an actor-manager-playwright of Jacobean times). Most
scholars agree that parts of the script (3.5; 4.1.41-47,147-154;
mostly involving the character of Hecate) are Middleton's. Other
scholars point out that in light of this definite tampering the
entire script becomes suspect. Wells and Taylor, in the Complete
Oxford Shakespeare, go as far as to head the play "Macbeth by William
Shakespeare (Adapted by Thomas Middleton.)"[1]

The postmodern question seems to arise easily from Macbeth:
Whose words are these? Where do they originate? Who possesses them?
The director has room for exploration. The UM Production decided to
avoid edited works (such as the Arden, Cambridge, or Signet
editions), and create a script based upon the four editions of the
original Folio (1623, 1632, 1664, 1685) as printed in the Variorum.
The director functioned as editor of the text: cutting spurious
material, using variations of text, and exorcising unnecessary (and
unoriginal) stage directions. This director-edited script was then
typed and reproduced, becoming the text for the production.

Editing for Production

The director-editor edits a playscript for two primary reasons:
brevity and clarity. Most directors feel that Shakespearean
playscripts are too long in duration for the modern MTV, sound
bite-oriented audience and, therefore, must be edited for production.
Macbeth, however, is one of Shakespeare's shortest and quickest-paced
plays, and requires little cutting for the sake of duration. Only
one scene is almost universally edited for this reason: Malcolm and
Macduff's scene, 4.3. The reason seems to be that the length of the

scene tends to slow the pace at a crucial time in the production. This scares most directors into an editorial rampage, leaving only a small fraction of the scene for performance. But a careful look at the scene reveals that this practice is a mistake. If we assume the antagonism of Malcolm and the agency of that antagonism as Macduff, this scene becomes crucial to our understanding of that action, and to an understanding of the postmodern ambiguity of Malcolm's character. Malcolm wins Macduff to his cause in this scene by testing his loyalty to moral leadership, yet Malcolm tests this loyalty through the use of deception. This ambiguity of nature is important to the audience's perception of the character, and should be retained. A careful edit of this scene may concentrate on eliminating the unnecessary repetition and the rather unimportant dialogue about the virtues of King Edward (157-180). If the tension and deception between Malcolm and Macduff is played strongly, the scene will carry its own pace and length.

Editing Shakespeare for the sake of clarity is the chief work of the director-editor. Many archaisms must be changed or edited for the production. Some words and phrases may be misunderstood due to changes in meaning. Other words and phrases may need to be edited or changed due to the similarity of old words to newer, unrelated words. One example of the latter occured in a recent production of King John: Pandulph announced grandly that he will "go whet upon the king." In performance, the result was hilarious for the audience and disastrous for the director. Changing words in Shakespeare can be tricky business, however. Verse rhythms and specific meanings may

affect the director's choice. The director would be wise to take
great care in editing choices.

The UM Production edited the playscript sparingly. The
interpolations of Thomas Middleton were edited, though not out of
unrealistic expectations of authenticity; rather because the Hecate
scenes are trite and poorly realized, usually resulting in a comic
performance. All stage directions were eliminated, since the
majority of them were editorial additions and unnecessary to
production (since most of them would be changed anyway). The use of
the term "witch" in the line references were replaced with the more
correct (and ambiguous) Weird Sisters. Edited lines were few.[2]

Editing Characters

Few theatre companies or departments can afford the luxury of
an unlimited supply of actors to fill the scores of small and
supernumerary characters Shakespeare inserted into his playscripts.
Macbeth, in the Folio of 1623, lists twenty-eight characters, not
counting the three murderers, Lords (several of whom have lines),
soldiers, and messengers. Usually the director chooses to reduce
this number by having an actor play more than one role. But this
technique has limitations, since actors are often recognizable and
this can lead to confusion, particularly when trying to distinguish
one small character from another. Also, the actor who would
successfully double in two or more roles must possess extraordinary
talent to change voice, body, and emotional content enough in the
same temporal space as the rest of the actors' rehearsal process.
More often than not the actor ends up frustrated and frustratingly

similar in both roles.

The UM Production solved the problem by reassigning the lines of many diverse characters to a few more clearly defined characters. For instance, the lords and noblemen of Scotland originally consisted of Lennox, Ross, Menteith, Angus, Caithness, the bleeding Sergeant (1.2), the old man (2.4), another Lord (3.6), Siward, and Young Siward. The UM Production cut all these characters down to three clearly distinguishable Lords: Lennox, a volatile, sarcastic nobleman; Ross, a sensitive, well-spoken diplomat; and Angus, a superstitious, fiercely loyal warrior. Fleance also took a few of Siward's lines. The messengers, murderers, and attendants to the Macbeths were played by the mischievous Weird Sisters. The final character/actor list for the UM Production was seventeen and this included Macduff's daughter, a character added to the script for thematic purposes and to reconcile a textual contradiction. With fewer roles cluttering the stage, the audience could follow the action of these characters more clearly. For an example of character condensation, see the appendix.

In the combination of characters, the director may explore postmodern ideas through the reconstructed character. One example of this kind of exploration was the character created by the UM Production's unification and expansion of the Porter and the Scottish Doctor. Questioning all assumptions about the reasons for the Porter's presence, one major thematic element seemed evident: the Porter recognized that his surrounding reality resembled (or was) hell (2.3.4-43). His response to that kind of reality was to make

himself "Porter of Hell Gate" (2.3.5) and mock the absurdity of that reality. Life, morality, and death are meaningless, and the end result of all "that goe the Primrose way to th'everlasting bonfire" (2.3.21) is a hell of punishment by mockery. The Porter appears to scoff at an (absent) metaphysical reality while acting as its primary representative.

The Scottish doctor, if viewed through pagan Celtic times (the starting place of the design concept), is seen as a medicinal shaman--a holy man who heals through natural means. He recognizes with full cognition the horror of the reality around him (the disintegration of Lady Macbeth, the delusions of Macbeth that he is magically protected by prophesy, the seeming intrusion of a metaphysical reality into a physical world). His responses sound hopeless: "A great perturbation of Nature, to receyve at once the benefit of sleep, and do the effects of watching" (5.1.12-13); "Foule whisp'rings are abroad: unnaturall deeds / Do breed unnaturall troubles" (5.1.71-72); "More needs she the Divine, then the Physitian: / God, God forgive us all" (5.1.75-76); "Were I from Dunsinane away, and cleere, / Profit againe should hardly draw me heere" (5.3.73-74). The doctor, unable to "Minister to a minde diseas'd," calls upon an absent god to forgive and heal. Of course, no answer comes.

Taken as polarities of a single character, the Porter and the Scottish Doctor should create an interesting response to the intersection of the metaphysical and temporal realities, as well as solving the obvious dilemma (in a pared down production) of these

characters' cameo-like nature. In the UM Production, however, the character did not succeed. The reasons involve the perception on the part of many audience members that the character of the Porter is somehow sacrosanct, the failure of the director to find a strong postmodern context in which to place the Porter monologue, and the director's lack of clear articulation of the postmodern themes to the actor portraying the character. A postmodern Porter/Doctor remains, at present, only a potential.

Addressing Modern Character Issues

Another character issue modern directors are faced with is the overwhelming number of white, masculine, male characters in Shakespeare. With an increasingly diverse acting base, being restricted in such a manner can be impractical and, in the casting process, aggravating. The postmodern director can explore strong avenues of meaning in Shakespeare's playscripts by using actors of color, gender, and image in unexpected ways. A beginning has been made in recent years to destroy archaic barriers, but clearly much more can be done. The problem lies in the concept of color-, gender-, or image-blind casting. This theory states that it is the audience's responsibility to somehow be "blind" to the visual elements of the character and to accept the actor as a "person," rather than a "person of color, gender, or image." This theory has at its heart excellent intentions, but its assumptions about the abilities of the audience to ignore important visual elements is naive.

A better, and certainly more exciting, answer to the problem is for the director to be color-, gender-, and image-broad, instead of

blind. When sensitively read, Shakespeare's playscripts can intercept modern issues and mind-frames brilliantly, leading to vitality and pertinence.

Color-Broad Reading

To be color-broad is to recognize that Shakespeare is truly multi-cultural and universal; therefore actors of color can bring new interpretations to roles before assumed to be played by whites. Minor moves have been made in this direction in the theatre, but rarely does one see the actor of color allowed to reinterpret a role through his color. Recently, Tygre's Heart Shakespeare Company in Portland, Oregon produced Shakespeare's Two Gentlemen of Verona.[3] In casting, the director, Michael Walling of Stage One Theatre in London, decided to read the characters in a color-broad fashion. He cast Valentine and Julia using African-American actors; but instead of ignoring the power of their image, he used the tension between an African-American Valentine and a white Silvia, and between an African-American Julia and a white Proteus, to review modern issues of interracial love. And why not? There is evidence that such issues were explored by Shakespeare himself (Julia often refers to herself as "black" or "Ethiope"; let alone dealing with the dark lady of the Sonnets). This is a good example of how color-broad reading and casting can address Shakespeare's issues in a modern context.

In Macbeth, one director used an African-American actor in the role of Macduff, setting him as an image of the different man, magically born without being born.[4] Other possibilities lie in the dramatic tensions in the script (Banquo and lineage, Duncan and

Malcolm, the English lords and soldiers). As African-American

literature has taught us, there is an irony in open-ended terms such

as "black" and "dark," words which appear throughout the play. An

African-American speaking Macbeth's lines

> Starres hide your fires,
> Let not Light see my black and deepe desires:
> The Eye winke at the Hand; yet let that bee,
> Which the Eye feares, when it is done to see.
> (1.4.62-65)

the meanings tend to double. Such explorations of double entendre

and ambiguity strengthens the beauty and depth of the performance.

This is one way the postmodern director explores meaning.

Gender-Broad Reading

Gender-broad reading and casting allows the director to cease

his assumptions about the gender roles of the characters.

Shakespeare used a form of gender-broad casting when he created roles

like Rosalind, Viola, Imogen, Portia, Nerissa and Jessica (Merchant

of Venice), Julia (Two Gentlemen of Verona), and Helena (All's Well

that Ends Well). The audience and Shakespeare saw a man play a woman

play a man (or more complex arrangements). This broadening of the

expectations of gender addressed issues of his day, and do so today.

Theatre has played with Shakespeare's intentions for centuries by

using women to play his female roles. It is time to broaden our view

of more characters in terms of gender.

With a simple broadening of perspective, Cardinal Pandulph in

King John could become Mother Pandulph, thereby tripling the thematic

punch of mothers as leaders (Elinore, mother of England; Constance,

mother of France; Pandulph, mother of the Church). A

gender-broadening look at Romeo and Juliet could yeild interesting ideas on homosexual or lesbian issues, even further strengthening the themes of "forbidden" love inherent in the play. In Merchant of Venice, portraying Shylock as a Jewish business woman, adds to our perspectives of women in business, women and ethnicity, and doubles the tension between Shylock and Antonio, Shylock and Jessica, Shylock and Portia. In Macbeth, one idea realized too late for the UM Production, was a gender-broad interpretation of Banquo. The prophesy of Macbeth becoming King and Banquo becoming the mother of kings, adds an interesting sexual/political tension between them and Lady Macbeth. Does Macbeth bed Banquo or kill her? The issue of women as warriors is addressed below, but as will be seen, it presents no inhibitions to a female interpretation of Banquo. One recent production of Macbeth used a woman (grey-haired, cigarette dangling from her twisted mouth) as the Porter, yeilding hilarious results in the bawdy interplay between her and Macduff.[5]

Image-Broad Reading

The issue of image-broadening is, perhaps, the toughest one for modern directors, since image bias is perceived to be one of the last bastions of bigotry. With the tremendous pull of societal pressures, the director most often yeilds to what he thinks are historical images of characters, even though they often have nothing to do with history past the last decade or two. Television and commercial advertising project stereotypes of characters onto a director, and unless he remains image-broad, he will only perpetuate the destructive stereotypes.

The typical image-narrow response in Shakespeare is the idea of large, broad-chested men and tiny, thin women. At first this idea may seem cliché, but a scan of most modern productions of Shakespeare reveals a preponderance of this image-narrow casting. Looking back only a few decades will undermine this narrow response and reveal the shallow nature of this image. Lovers in Shakespeare often result in certain reflexes in directors. The image-narrow "rule" is that the male should be taller, handsome as a model, and strongly masculine in attitude; the female should be petite, pretty as a model, and extraordinarily feminine (to the point that feminists often mistake directors' biases for Shakespeare's flaws). Both of these notions of gender image are ridiculous and destructive. In a recent production of A Midsummer Night's Dream, the actress playing Helena was taller and bolder than Demetrius, which fit the thematic elements marvelously.[6] In the end, no one thought their match was humorous, because those stereotypes had been broken down by the action of the play. Helena and Demetrius became like every other couple in the world who find love in their differences.

In the same production, the director, using image-broad ideas, cast two tall, large-size actors in the roles of Oberon and Titania.[7] The image-narrow approach is almost universally whispy, airy fairies which stems much more out of romantic and Disney-like notions of fairies than Elizabethan notions. The director, noting the use of the term "titan" in the name of the Fairy Queen, decided to create darker, earthy fairies which resulted in a desire for size, weight, and good dimension in the actors.

Aged characters in Shakespeare are often seen as dottering, foolish, and feeble, whether written that way or not. Corin in <u>As You Like It</u>, Gaunt and York in <u>Richard II</u>, and Brabantio in <u>Othello</u> are examples of characters almost universally stereotyped in this way. But a close reading of the playscripts reveal these characters as vital, intelligent, complex roles, undeserving of such absurd simplification.

Rosalind in <u>As You Like It</u> often suffers by this type of image-narrow reading. When the director uses the feminine, delicate image for Rosalind, he lessens the thematic issues of sexual confusion and gender roles. One of the reasons for the image-narrow reading is a fear that a masculine Rosalind will lead to homosexual undertones between Orlando and Ganymede. But this is a present tension in the playscript, and to refuse to address this tension weakens the dramatic, contemporary, and universal aspects of the play.

The UM Production used an image-broad reading of the role of Lady Macduff. Often presented as a fluffy, feminine mother totally incapable of self-reliance, the director and actress sought to create a capable warrior-woman, fiercely protective of her children, husband, and home. This strengthens her anger with her husband at his perceived desertion of his family and allows an exciting scene of motherly defence against the murderers (4.2). Lady Macduff was played by a tall, strong-looking woman who appeared in several scenes of the play with her husband. The image became that of a family of warriors, fierce and loyal to their country and home. There is

plenty of historical precedence for female warriors (particularly in Celtic lands) and, of course, the issue of women in war is extremely contemporary.

The postmodern director of Shakespeare has many opportunities to broaden the audience's expectations of human nature, to explore variant meanings in the playscript, and to make new connections between the real individual and the mythic character. The biggest hinderance to color-, gender-, and image-broad reading and casting is the fear of the new, which is the strongest means by which the postmodernist attempts to keep the theatre alive and vital. As America (and the world) approaches a new understanding of the wealth of diversity, the director of theatre will do well to embrace this wealth without fear.

<u>Son</u>. He ha's kill'd me Mother,
Run away I pray you.

But this is not the kind of woman who runs away. Screaming in
agony, the mother whips from her belt a very wicked-looking dagger,
and lunges toward the dark, wet, mischievous sister. She dodges with
a burst of laughter. The evil sister has leaped upon the boulder:
with one hand, she grabs the mother from behind; with the other, she
uses a sharpened antler to slice the mother's throat. The little
girl has hidden herself behind a mirror. "Will she be discovered and
killed," I wonder. "Why are the sisters so bad?"
But the sisters, knowing where the girl lurks, begin to coo and
sing softly, stretching out their hands to the hidden girl. The
daughter of Macduff slowly emerges, pausing for a moment before the
mirror, then, with one last look at the bodies of her family, she
takes the nicer sister's hand.

CHAPTER 6

THE PROBLEM OF LANGUAGE

The postmodernist questions the ability for language to convey

fixed meaning. Poetic language is questioned in this fashion by

postmodernists and modernists alike. Poetry is open-ended, conveying

many (and sometimes, conflicting) connotations. Of course,

Shakespeare's playscripts are poetry. They consist either of poetic

verse or a mixture of poetic verse and poetic prose, but the language

generally employs the tone and complexity of poetry. For this

reason, the director of Shakespeare should be well acquainted with

poetic structure and devices. Whether the postmodernist uses the

poetry to construct or destruct meaning is a personal choice, but a

knowledge of the structure and devices of poetry is foundational.

Since several good sources of information are available to the

director, the majority of this information will not be repeated

here.[1] Instead, several concepts that may be of interest to the

postmodern director will be explored.

Since poetry is open-ended, it allows the consumer to wander

along the various meanings of language, without feeling the need for

closure. Unfortunately, this open-ended nature goes against every

instinct of the director. The director often thinks his job is to

close the meaning of the playscript, and in a certain sense, this is

correct. Actors, as Stanislavsky reminds us, cannot play

generalities, but must make specific choices about meaning and content. Directors must encourage this behavior. But directors also must keep in mind that the reception of the choice by the audience should not necessarily lead to closure for them; that the complexity and the ambiguity of the poetic language can, and should, reverberate through the audience's mind. The director, to give this complexity a site for reverberation, should encourage the actor to go beyond surface choices of meaning and to find choices in the deep structure of the language.

One of the most obvious examples of this open-ended approach to meaning choice is Macbeth's famous soliloquy of despair:

> Macb. She should have dy'de heereafter;
> There would have beene a time for such a word:
> To morrow, and to morrow, and to morrow,
> Creepes in this petty pace from day to day,
> To the last Syllable of Recorded time:
> And all our yesterdays, have lighted Fooles
> The way to dusty death. Out, out, breefe Candle,
> Life's but a walking Shadow, a poore Player,
> That struts and frets his houre upon the Stage,
> And then is heard no more. It is a Tale
> Told by an Ideot, full of sound and fury
> Signifying nothing.
> (5.5.21-32)

The actor playing Macbeth may wish to play the obvious, surface meaning of despair over the loss of his wife. But the director should encourage the deeper meanings of the text: the discovery of life's essential meaninglessness, the irony of the powerlessness of power, the division of the actor from his representation, the absurdity inherent in the ambiguous nature of the tale.

There is a ceratin amount of closure (denotation) that takes place in the act of performance. But the postmodern director of

Shakespeare realizes that issues, themes, and language itself are often far more complicated than single, simple choices can fully convey. The director, instead of fearing the ambiguous nature of meaning, should embrace it, allowing the production to convey the beautiful complexity of life that Shakespeare's playscripts often contain.

Speaking Poetry

Exploring poetic scansion in Shakespeare's poetry not only helps the actor communicate more clearly and beautifully, but helps the director and the actor search for alternate meanings in the script. The vast majority of Shakespearean playscripts are written in iambic pentameter (_'_'_'_'_') or, in the case of "supernatural" characters, trochaic tetrameter ('_'_'_'_). If one starts with the assumption that these forms are present, only allowing for variations when absolutely inherent in the vocal structure, one will usually produce poetic speech that is clear and easily understandable. In this sense, poetic speech (centered on verse structure and rhythm to convey various meanings) is different from realistic speech (centered on individualistic, emotional choices.)

Iambic pentameter is similar in structure to a heartbeat. It flows naturally and without inhibition. Irregularities in this structure feel like irregularities in a heartbeat. These irregular heartbeats are valuable as approaches to varieties of meaning. In Macbeth, an example is Macbeth's ambivalent monologue which begins

Macb.　If it/were done,/when 'tis/done, then/'twer well,

It were/done quick/ly:　If/th'Assass/ina/tion

Could tram/mell up/the Con/sequence,/and catch

With his/surcease,/Successe:/ that but/this blow

Might be/the be/all, and/the end/all.　Heere,

But heere,/upon/this Banke/and Schoole/of time,

Wee'ld jumpe/the life/to come. . .

                                        (1.7.5-11)

The entire structure so far can be assumed to be iambic pentameter,
unfluttering heartbeat, with one exception: the weak ending of the
second line.　This leads to a slight heart murmur on the word,
"assassination."　When this rhythm is emphasized, one begins to hear
a waver in Macbeth's thought process (heartbeat).　By the end of the
monologue, Macbeth's verbal heartbeat shows signs of distress, and he
concludes the speech by setting apart one particular idea:

Macb.   I have/no Spurre

To pricke/the sides/of my/intent,/but on/ley

Vaulting/Ambi/tion, which/ore-leapes/it selfe,

And falles/on th'oth/er. . .

                                        (1.7.29-32)

This use of scansion aids in the phrasing of Shakespeare's
verse, particularly with monologues, and aids in conveying meaning
through poetic speech.　Other aids to phrasing involve the use of
operatives (those important words that focus emphasis) and the use of
textual and sub-textual paraphrasing.

Shakespeare's other uses of poetic devices (alliteration,

assonance, rhyme, etc.) and sound (plosives, fricatives, nasals, glides, the legatto stringing together of vowels, linking sounds, etc.) can convey strong meanings and emotions through their careful study and selective use. The postmodernist may find the values of pure sound helpful in the communication of the emotions and ideas of Shakespeare. Ignoring the language only leaves the director with fewer options and weaker impacts.

Unfortunately, the UM Production was performed at a time when the director did not have a strong grasp of the value of scansion, poetic devices, and sound usage. This left moments that were chaotic and destructively faulty. These errors were unfortunate and unnecessary, and will not be repeated by this director.

A note dealing with archaisms is, perhaps, warranted as well. Shakespeare often employs words and phrases which no longer convey strong meaning to audiences. Many actors, when faced with these archaisms, grow frightened and want to see them edited or replaced. But as we have seen, editing can be tricky business, and before such extreme means are taken, the director should try to encourage conveying the meaning of the archaism through the use of tone. Canadian director, Alan Robertson, suggests that Shakespeare often has provided methods of speaking archaisms in his choice of sounds, and with proper tonal inflection and delivery of sound, the meaning will become clear.[2] He uses the example from _Othello_ of the phrase "slubber the gloss." The full line is "You must therefore be content to slubber the gloss of your new fortunes with this more stubborn and boist'rous expedition."[3] There is no need for the audience to

understand the full meaning of the archaic term, a creative use of the fricatives and plosives and the tone of the voice will convey enough meaning to the audience, without worrying over the details. This is a strong device for carrying archaisms without the use of editing.

<u>Malc</u>. So thankes to all at once, and to each one,
<u>Whom</u> we invite, to see us Crown'd at Scone.

I wonder as I watch Malcolm and Macduff and all exit, the
ghosts of Macbeth's dead following through the dead forest, leaving
Fleance alone, standing numbly looking at his sword, "What about the
sisters' prophesy? Shouldn't Fleance be king? Will Fleance commit
the same acts of aggression Macbeth did? How is this a happy ending?
There seems to be no justice."

As Fleance follows Malcolm, the three sisters filter through
the blackened trees. A fourth figure joins them. It is the daughter
of Macduff--but her clothes have begun to disintegrate, shells and
feathers hang from her clothes and hair, her face is painted like one
of the wierd sisters. "What has happened to her?" I wonder. "Has
she become one of them? Or was she one of them to begin with?"

The four run to the center of the stage and lift the bloody bag
they find there. In it is the severed head of Macbeth. They laugh,
offering it to the audience. Then they disappear into the dead
forest.

CHAPTER 7

CREATING THE PERFORMANCE

The postmodern director of Shakespearean playscripts should
confront historical issues such as audience expectation and the
playscript's realities, should seek selvedges through action and
theme, prepare the script through editing and addressing modern
issues, explore the language through the embracing of ambiguity and
poetic devices, and confront historical issues, such as audience
expectation and the play's realities. The director is then armed
with many creative options with which to create an exploratory,
open-ended (yet clear and communicative) production.

The director then seeks to make these theories and ideas
plastic. These theories will never find physical form, however, if
the director does not inform his actors and designers of these
concepts. Actors and designers should be fully informed
collaborators with the director to find the plastic form of the
theories. If they are used as puppets, manipulated into form by the
dominating director, they will not be completely realized, and the
director will find himself opposed out of ignorance. The co-creators
of the play, unified in intent and theory, will produce a memorable,
successful play.

The UM Production made use of a study guide, compiled and
written by the director, which was presented with the script to all

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actors and designers. Included in the study guide was background on the historical and textual aspects of the play, articles on Celtic customs and fairy-lore, notes on pronunciation, and a recommended reading list. The first rehearsal was devoted entirely to a discussion of the structure, core and major thematic elements of the play. The first week of rehearsals was devoted to a close reading of the playscript, paying particular attention to theoretical aspects of the play and discussing the means of making that theory practical. These discussions were mirrored in the production meetings with designers and crew. The informed actors and designers, together with the director, armed with theory, were then able to build a production that not only entertained an audience, but stimulated them into a full theatre experience.

Within the rehearsal process, actors and designers (having been guided by the director's work) brought new ideas and fresh meanings to the performance. Such collaboration was encouraged by the director.

Three years elapsed between the time of the University of Montana's production of <u>Macbeth</u> and the writing of this thesis. In that time, the director has had much time to evaluate the extent to which the UM Production pushed the postmodern elements of the production. It becomes clear that much more could have been done. For example, the act of breaking down representation (particularly in the case of Macbeth) could have been carried much further. In the soliloquies alone, lie many opportunities to break down the physical and psychological barrier between the actor and the audience, to

explore the nature of the actor and the character, and to expand the variant meanings in the script. For example, Macbeth's monologue of ambivalence, "If it were done, when 'tis done," focuses on the splitting of Macbeth's psyche. Perhaps a postmodern production might use two actors to play the two halves of Macbeth; perhaps one could use multi-media (film or slides) to emphasize the choices before Macbeth; perhaps one could focus on one of the operative ideas (the word "if" would do nicely) and, through the use of many voices or repetition, redirect the form of monologue into fresh paths.

The use of language as pure sounds has been explored by the "absurdists" and other experimental theatre artists. The UM Production explored pure sound through the vocalizations of the Weird Sisters, but could have explored it much further in other characters, or simply used it as a mood-making device. The open-ended nature of words could have been investigated through the exploration of speech as sound.

Perhaps the production could have pressed further the interaction between the ghosts from metaphysical reality and the characters (particularly Macbeth, Lady Macbeth, and Malcolm). This interaction could break down the spirit of "playing the text" for the audience, causing further investigations of the relationship between the script and the audience.

On the whole, the UM Production was a sort of bridge between a traditional, modernist approach to Macbeth and an exploration of the postmodern elements of the play. This bridge probably was a reflection of the changing values of a director just discovering

postmodern thought. A purely postmodern exploration of <u>Macbeth</u> by this director, without the ghost of modernist technique haunting him, is a strongly anticipated project for the future.

The postmodernist questions: he seeks, in the performance of playscripts, to create questions in the minds of the audience. This process can engage and inspire, even though specific "answers" may never be discovered. By doing this, the postmodernist can add new critical ideas and questions through the act of performance. Literary critics and theatre philosophers add their own criticisms which can be reflected in performance. It is a cycle by which Shakespeare can remain contemporary, vital, and satisfying.

APPENDIX 1

EXAMPLE OF CHARACTER CONDENSATION

Character List According to Folio

Character	Act 1							Act 2				Act 3					Act 4			Act 5							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Weird Sisters	x		x														x										
Duncan		x		x		x																					
Malcolm		x		x		x				x									x				x		x	x	x
Sergeant		x																									
Lennox		x		x		x				x		x			x	x	x				x						
Ross		x	x	x		x					x	x			x			x	x								x
Macbeth			x	x	x		x	x	x	x		x	x		x		x					x		x		x	x
Banquo			x	x		x		x		x		x		x	x												
Angus			x	x		x													x		x						
Donalbain				x		x				x																	
Lady Macbeth					x	x	x		x	x		x	x		x					x							
Macbeth Mess.					x																			x			
Macduff						x				x	x								x						x	x	x
Fleance								x						x													
Macbeth Serv.								x				x	x									x					
Porter										x																	
Old Man											x																
3 Murderers												x		x	x			x									
Lord																x											
Lady Macduff																		x									
Macduff Boy																		x									
Messenger																		x									
Engl. Doctor																			x								
Scot. Doctor																				x		x					
Lady Servant																				x							
Monteith																					x		x				
Caithness																					x		x				
Seyton																						x		x			
Siward																							x		x	x	x
Young Siward																							x			x	

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Character List According to UM Production

Act / scene columns: Act 1 (scenes 1–7), Act 2 (1–4), Act 3 (1–5), Act 4 (1–3), Act 5 (1–8).

Character	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
	Act 1							Act 2				Act 3					Act 4			Act 5							
Weird Sisters	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Duncan		x		x		x								x					x		x		x		x		
Malcolm		x		x		x			x									x				x		x	x	x	
Macbeth			x	x	x		x	x	x	x		x	x		x		x				x		x			x	x
Banquo			x	x		x		x		x		x		x	x		x			x		x		x		x	
Macduff		x		x		x			x	x							x			x		x	x	x			
Angus	x	x		x		x			x	x	x		x		x	x		x		x		x	x				
Ross		x	x	x		x			x	x	x		x	x		x	x		x		x		x	x	x		
Lennox		x	x	x		x			x	x	x		x	x		x	x		x		x		x	x	x		
Doctor											x		x		x		x		x		x						
Fleance							x		x			x	x							x		x	x	x			
Macduff Boy									x							x	x		x		x		x		x		
Macduff Girl									x							x			x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
Lady Macduff									x	x						x	x		x		x		x		x		
Lady Macbeth				x	x	x		x	x		x	x		x		x			x						x		

ENDNOTES

Introduction

[1]Jean-François Lyotard, The Postmodern Condition: A Report on
Knowledge, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi, Foreward by
Fredric Jameson. Theory and History of Literature Series, ed. Wlad
Godzich and Jochen Shulte-Sasse, no. 10 (Minneapolis: University of
Minnesota, 1984), 81.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Albrecht Wellmer, The Persistence of Modernity, Essays on
Aesthetics, Ethics, and Postmodernism, trans. David Midgley
(Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991), vii.

[4]Jacques Derrida, "The Theatre of Cruelty and the Closure
of Representation," Writing and Difference (Chicago: University of
Chicago Press, 1978), 234.

[5]Jacques Derrida, "Sending: on representation," trans.
Peter and Mary Caws, Social Research, 49 (1882): 319, quoted in Jon
Stratton, Writing Sites: A Genealogy of the Postmodern World
(Ann Arbor: Univer-sity of Michigan Press, 1990), 9, italics mine.

[6]Stratton, ibid., 10.

[7]Herbert Blau, The Eye of Prey: Subversions of the
Postmodern, Theories of Contemporary Culture Series, no. 9, ed.
Kathleen Wood (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 169.

[8]Stratton, 37, italics mine.

Between Introduction and Chapter 1

[1]Condensed from formal and informal critique sessions,
reviews, and student and director's journals. These condensations
will be placed between following chapters without further footnoting.

Chapter 1

[1]Marvin Rosenberg, The Masks of Macbeth (Berkeley:
University of California Press, 1978).

[2]A complete list of all the filmed or videotaped versions of Macbeth would probably shock most people. Wheeler, ibid., 815-847 and 869-877 lists the following film and television versions:

Films
1902, with Arthur Bourchier and Violet Vanbrugh
1908, Vitagraph
1909, Cines Co.
1910, Film d'Art
1911, Co-operative Cinematograph Co.
1912, Heidelberger Film-Institute
1913, Film-Industrie
1916, Eclair
1916, with Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree and Constance Collier, production supervised by D.W. Griffith, destroyed by fire.
1922, Elel-Film
1946, Thomas A. Blair
1948, Orson Welles, Mercury Theatre Co.
1950, Katherine Stenholm
1960, George Schaefer, with Maurice Evans and Judith Anderson
1971, Roman Polanski, Playboy Productions

Television Productions
1949, NBC, with Walter Hampden and Joyce Redman
1951, CBS, with Charleton Heston and Judith Evelyn
1954, Hallmark Hall of Fame, with Maurice Evans and Judith Anderson
1974, BBC, with Eric Porter and Janet Suzman
1979, Independent Television, Trevor Nunn
1982, ARTS/Lincoln Center, Sarah Caldwell
1983, BBC Shakespeare, with Nicol Williamson and Jane Lapotaire

Film Adaptations
1914, The Real Thing at Last
1917, Lady Macbeth
1952, Le Rideau Rouge (Ce Soir, on Joue Macbeth)
1955, Joe Macbeth
1961, Sibirska Ledi Magbet (The Siberian Lady Macbeth)

[3] Blau, 161-188.

[4]This section refers to Stanislavsky's theories of acting as discussed in his posthumously published trilogy: Constantin Stanislavsky, An Actor Prepares, trans. Elizabeth Hapgood Reynolds, introduction by John Gielgud (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1936); Stanislavsy, Building a Character, trans. Elizabeth Hapgood Reynolds, introduction by Joshua Logan (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1949); Stanislavsky, Creating a Role, trans. Elizabeth Hapgood Reynolds, foreward by Robert Lewis (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1961).

Chapter 2

[1]Alexander Dean, _Fundamentals of Play Directing_ (New York: Rinehart & Co., 1941), 2. Dean finishes his section with definitive clarity: "In the theatre the playwright alone is a creative artist; the director, the actor, and the designer are interpretive" (24).

[2]Alexander Dean and Lawrence Carra, _Fundamentals of Play Directing_, (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1980), 16. Carra goes as far as to revise the subtitle of the section, "The Director--Interpretive and Creative Artist."

[3]Arthur Miller, _Death of a Salesman_ (New York: Viking Press, Viking Compass Edition, 1958), 12.

[4]Eugene O'Neill, _The Hairy Ape_, in _Representative Modern Dramas_, ed. Charles Huntington Whitman (New York: Macmillan Co., 1938), 835.

[5]Of course, this leads to the fact of which all directors are aware: the ultimate authority is given to the actor, since he is the only sentient presence in the temporal production. This is why trust and agreement between the director and actors becomes critical to a unified production. If any artist, therefore, is central to the creative force in the theatre, it's probably the actor.

[6] Antonin Artaud, _The Theater and Its Double_, trans. Mary Caroline Richards (New York: Grove Press, 1958), 74-83.

[7] Herbert Blau, _Take Up the Bodies: Theater at the Vanishing Point_ (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982).

Chapter 3

[1]These dates are pretty much the consensus of most scholars. Other dates have been suggested. One well-accepted and documented chronology is that in G. Blakemore Evans, ed., _The Riverside Shakespeare_ (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1974), 47-56.

[2]Jan Kott, _Shakespeare Our Contemporary_, trans. Boleslaw Taborski, preface by Martin Esslin (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1964; first published as _Szkice O Scekspirze_ [Warsaw: Panstwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1964]), 87.

[3]Terry Eagleton, "Language: _Macbeth_, _Richard II_, _Henry IV_," chap. in _William Shakespeare_, Rereading Literature (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), 1-17.

Chapter 4

[1]Kott, 87-88.

Chapter 5

[1]Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor, "Introduction to Macbeth,"
The Complete Oxford Shakespeare, Vol.3 (Oxford: Oxford University
Press, 1987), 1307. For an excellent scholarly discussion of the
textual history of Shakespeare's playscripts by the same authors, see
Stanley Wells and others, William Shakespeare: A Textual Companion
(Oxford: Clarendon, 1987); the chapter about Macbeth is from 543-548.

[2]Following is a complete list of the edited lines in the UM
Production: Act 1.2.24-25a,31-34a,57; 3.47b-51; 5.25-26b; 7.77b-78a.
Act 3.1.28,96,100,113-137,139,140a-142b; 2.50b-52,64-66;
3.1.8,1b,16-21; 4.42b-46; 5. Act 4.1.28,31,41-47,50,104b-106,
147-154; 3.12-15a,18b-21,41b-42a,70a,75b-77a,79-86a,90b-92a,96b-104b,
107b-108a, 110b-115,134b-137a,150-181,191b-192,194b-195a,210-214,220
(ref. to Siward),222,238,244,275-276a. Act 5.1.34b-35; 2.5a,13b-15,
24,26b-28; 2.11-15; 3.19-20a,67b-69; 4.26-28; 5.15b-17a; 6.8;
7.44-48,51-54,59-60, 62-69.

[3]William Shakespeare, Two Gentlemen of Verona, directed by
Michael Walling, Tygre's Heart Shakespeare Co., Dolores Winningstad
Theatre, Portland Center for the Performing Arts, Portland OR, 18
October-10 November 1991.

[4]William Shakespeare, Macbeth, directed by Michael Ladenson,
College of Fine Arts, Studio Theatre, Carnegie-Mellon University,
Pittsburg PA, 11-13 October 1982.

[5] Macbeth, directed by Patrick Page, Tygre's Heart
Shakespeare Co., Dolores Winningstad Theatre, Portland Center for
the Performing Arts, Portland OR, 7 February-1 March 1992.

[6]Carole Oberholtzer as Helena and John Armour as Demetrius,
in A Midsummer Night's Dream, by William Shakespeare, directed by Jan
Powell, Tygre's Heart Shakespeare Co., Dolores Winningstad Theatre,
Portland Center for the Performing Arts, Portland OR, 31 May-23 June
1991.

[7]Ibid., Glenn Williams as Oberon and Rebecca Lowe as Titania.

Chapter 6

[1]Laurence Perrine, Sound and Sense, An Introduction to Poetry
(New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1956), and its subsequent
editions, is an excellent source for the director or actor. Robert
Benedetti, The Actor at Work (Englewood Cliffs NJ: Prentice-Hall,

1970), and its subsequent editions, contain excellent chapters on managing poetic structure.

[2]Alan Robertson, interviewed in <u>Othello: Behind the Scenes</u>, produced by University of Montana Department of Radio-TV, 17 min., 1987, videocassette.

[3]Evans, Ibid., 1209.

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        Caroline Richards. New York: Grove Press, 1958.

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        London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1967.

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