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THE PRESENTATION OF JACOBAN WITCHCRAFT BELIEFS IN SHAKESPEARE'S MACBETH

by

John Maurice Metcalf

A thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

Department of English
Carleton University
Ottawa, Ontario
May 15, 1992

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the nature, prevalence, and strength of witchcraft beliefs in Shakespeare's England. It surveys the witchhunt's persecutions and executions, as society's response to witchcraft. These inquiries sustain a detailed investigation of Shakespeare's presentation of witchcraft beliefs in Macbeth. In Chapter I, sources of information are discussed, and a general overview of contemporary witchcraft beliefs is presented. Chapter II discusses more specific aspects of the witchcraft doctrine, the legal and religious bases of the witchhunt, and the process of some selected trials during Shakespeare's lifetime. Chapter III examines King James I and VI of England and Scotland, some root causes of his virulent anti-witch attitude, and its decline in the latter years of his English reign. Chapter IV explores the presentation of witchcraft in Macbeth. Some unconventional interpretations are proposed. Chapter V surveys what selected critics have said, or not said, about the witches in Macbeth, and suggests areas where future investigation could be warranted and useful.

This Thesis is Dedicated To My Wife

Leila Rosalind Metcalf

Whose love, support, and gentle pushes when needed,
assured the success of the project

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INTRODUCTION

The argument of this thesis is that witchcraft beliefs in Renaissance England, and the customary responses to fears generated by them, were a central and disturbing aspect of life in Shakespeare's society and culture, and a source of intense concern. The argument further holds that these witchcraft beliefs influenced Shakespeare in the creation of Macbeth, and are vividly manifest in the play. Because of this, the play provides a valid text for their examination. The thesis pays special attention to the witch-hunt, with its persecutions and executions, as the ultimate expression of the witchcraft mania. King James I and VI of England and Scotland is also studied as a major influence on both the English witchcraft phenomenon and on Macbeth.

The extended time-frame for this examination is the era between Henry VIII's Act of 1542 and George II's Repeal Act of 1736. More specific investigation focuses on the period between the first English Renaissance execution for witchcraft in 1566 and the last one in 1682. "At Exeter, in 1682, a woman named Alice Holland was the last person in England to be convicted and hanged for witchcraft" (Radford 112). The principal inquiry centres, however, on events during Shakespeare's lifetime, 1564 to 1616. Significant study is devoted to political and religious determinants of contemporary beliefs, with particular emphasis on the influence of King James. This investigation probes the effect of Jacobean societal and cultural beliefs and practices on the play. It speculates about the play's reciprocal impact on the culture, and whether such impact enhanced, or deviated from, existing concepts. As Jean Howard notes:

We need to begin a fundamental rethinking of the ways in which Shakespeare's texts relate to other aspects of Elizabethan culture, and a reassessment of the...work these plays performed in that culture. (133)

The "other aspects" examined in this thesis are the cultural beliefs in, and responses to, witchcraft and the diabolic.

A problem in discovering Renaissance "historical truths" revolves around whether or not it is possible to ascertain, with any degree of certainty and objectivity, the beliefs and practices of a society and culture that existed almost four centuries ago. McCanless is astutely cognizant of this problem of interpreting the text:

In analyzing a Renaissance text what meaning can one arrive at which is not a "Renaissance" meaning? And what meaning can one arrive at which is not also a "twentieth-century" meaning? Where is either meaning located save in the text that makes the production of both meanings possible? (87)

The text is indeed the primary source for investigation. This thesis rests on the conviction that there is a relationship between witchcraft beliefs and the Elizabethan/Jacobean structures of political and social authority, and that it is possible to discover and examine that relationship through Macbeth.

Quotations from the play are from the Oxford Shakespeare, The Tragedy of Macbeth, Nicholas Brooke, ed., 1990, unless otherwise noted.

CHAPTER I

RENAISSANCE WITCHCRAFT

Problems in interpreting the text can be alleviated by examining relevant, original and authoritative Renaissance texts and writings. There is an immense volume of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century contemporary writing that discusses witches, witchcraft, and the supernatural in every detail and from every point of view. For this thesis, the following categories of primary source materials, mainly in printed form, have been used to glean knowledge of English Renaissance witchcraft beliefs and practices.

- i) Contemporary texts and manuscripts.
- ii) Pamphlets (chapbooks), dealing with the history of particular trials. These documents usually conclude with details of confession and execution. A folio sheet folded into a quarto or octavo and sewed together, was perhaps the origin of these pamphlets, which were essentially narrative. In England their salesmen were called chapmen or peddlers.
- iii) Local or municipal records, usually court files, but sometimes merely simple things such as expense accounts.
- iv) Memoirs and diaries, particularly of such persons as trial witnesses, and court officials.
- v) The works of local historians, which often include trials and hangings for witchcraft as events within their counties.
- vi) Writers, mainly theologians, who discuss the theory and doctrine of witchcraft.

vii) State papers that contain occasional references to the activities of the Devil and his agents in the realm.

Contemporary plays and entertainments on the subject of witchcraft provide a slightly less reliable, but still valuable, source. Also, the dramatic entertainments known as Masques often dealt with supernatural subjects. These revels normally involved dance and disguise, with the spectacular and musical elements usually eclipsing plot and character. They were acted by amateurs, including members of the court. Ben Jonson's A Masque of Queens (1609) deals with witches and the supernatural. Towards the end the witches are routed by the arrival of Bel-Anna, often acted by King James's wife, Queen Anne.

Ballads, particularly the newsy Broadside Ballads, are in much the same category as plays. Most of them deal with cases about which information is available from other sources, and they seem to follow the narratives and depositions faithfully. The popularity of the ballad is attested by the fact that in 1560 a bundle of 796 ballads waiting to be duly processed was found in the "cubberd" of Stationer's Hall. The term "broadside", frequently used synonymously with the word "ballad", refers to a folio sheet printed on one side only. Some years ago the Society of Antiquarians differentiated between the two terms. According to the Society, a broadside is in prose. It could, however, be only a drawing (of an execution, for example) or picture such as of Queen Elizabeth. On the other hand, any metrical composition printed on one side of a folio sheet is classified as a ballad. (Appendix A).

As well as the text of Macbeth, each type of resource listed above has been utilized to develop the argument of this thesis. The major

reliance has been, however, on contemporary texts, and on chapmen's narrative pamphlets. Macfarlane says that "comparison of indictments and pamphlet accounts supports the general accuracy of both sources".

He then goes on to note:

Pamphlets, therefore, are a vital and reliable source, providing otherwise inaccessible material and correcting the somewhat narrow impression of witchcraft prosecutions given by indictments. (86)

Newspapers, which commenced publication in the seventeenth century and are potential sources of information, have not been used for this project because they lie just beyond its specific time frame. The Corante was begun in 1621, while the Weekly News was launched in 1622. (In 1702 the Corante became the first English daily newspaper.) These journals, like today's newspapers, regularly exploited the unusual and the bizarre, such as the witch trials.

With regard to sources, there is an important caveat that students of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century witchcraft phenomena must bear clearly in mind. It relates to utilizing Renaissance information sources to determine cultural impulses for witch persecutions. In short, it concerns the societal origins of witchcraft beliefs and persecutions.

Two distinct subcultures can be identified within the Elizabethan and Jacobean societies. They are the "intellectual elite culture" on the one hand, and the "popular/peasant culture" on the other. (The term culture is used here to indicate a system of such things as attitudes, beliefs, codes of behaviour, and other manifestations of human cerebral achievement.) The social elite culture comprised such groups as royalty and nobility, the aristocracy, the judiciary, the clergy, the wealthy, and the literate upper classes. The popular culture comprised

such largely illiterate groups as peasants, other labourers, artisans, and the common citizens of the lower classes:

...we [have] come to recognize that those who were once paternalistically described as 'the common people in civilized society' in fact possessed a culture of their own. (Ginzburg xiv)

In examining the British witchcraft phenomenon from a distance of almost four hundred years, it is tempting to place too absolute a reliance upon written resources taken at face value. What needs to be kept in mind, however, is that such resources represent the views and beliefs of individuals who were almost invariably (but not entirely) attached to the dominant, elite culture. The inherent pitfall lies in making categorical statements and drawing absolute conclusions from them. In practice, researchers and historians have relied almost completely upon data derived from such sources. The sources are accepted at face value, and precise and universal "truths" are deduced as a result. In describing his own studies, Carlo Ginzburg states:

In the midst of research on witchcraft....everywhere I ran up against inquisitorial concepts of witchcraft derived from sources of learned origin. (xix)

This situation existed because the remote peasant tradition, the heritage of those persons who comprised the common culture, was almost entirely oral. The inherent difficulties in attempting to reconstruct an oral culture are such that only indirect methods of approach are possible. In his particular case, Ginzburg tells about his "discovery of a current of previously ignored belief" (xix) that reflected the position of the common culture. He detected this current by studying inconsistencies between the questions of judges and the replies of the accused. While this indicates that methods can be devised to uncover

the opinions of the common people, it could be argued that such conclusions must be tenuous at best, since indirect methods still rely almost completely on written material. The difficulties are such that, although the lower classes are no longer ignored by historians, they may well be condemned to remain silent.

Ginzburg (xv) tells of Robert Mandrou who has attempted to study how elite French culture was imposed on the masses. In this venture he expanded the meaning of "colportage" to refer collectively to the mass of inexpensive, crudely printed booklets and other materials sold at fairs or in the countryside by itinerant vendors. His colportage is paralleled by the English chapbooks and broadsheets in which one of Mandrou's "recurring themes" would certainly have been witchcraft and witch persecutions. The extent and nature of the common culture's participation in even "colportage" is difficult to determine.

This thesis is grounded, then, in resources that, by their very nature, generally reflect the perceptions, beliefs, and practices of the intellectual elite. By extension, it attends to elite perceptions of Macbeth, and to the institutional bases of witchcraft beliefs and persecutions. It examines the play and its formal correspondences with elite beliefs. In short, it surveys the causes of witchcraft essentially in terms of the role of the formal institutions. It accepts Ginzburg's point, however, that inferences about the common culture can be valid and reliable. Annabel Gregory notes that most current approaches believe that:

responsibility for the dramatic rise and decline in witchcraft prosecutions in early modern Europe lay primarily with the elites who controlled the courts rather than with the accusers, who were usually of lower status. (31)

She then refutes the absolute truth of that position, and goes on to support Ginzburg's view that it is possible, albeit difficult, to abstract the beliefs of the common culture from available materials. She suggests that it can be accomplished, for example, by focusing on the reasons why accusers were primarily concerned with maleficia (others causing harm by supernatural means), rather than with diabolism. She submits that in studying witchcraft the "exclusion of popular attitudes has been too extreme" (32). She also cautions against overstating the contrast between elite and popular attitudes, because of the strong possibility it could lead to stereotypes.

The present thesis accepts that the elite picture is the more thoroughly available, even though the two cultures existed in tandem. The concept of "Jacobean Audience", for example, encompasses members of both cultures, but present conjectures and conclusions about audience perceptions and responses are determined, de facto, almost completely in terms of the elite members of that audience. Similarly, the members of trial juries were drawn from both cultures. The trials were, however, under the control of the elite judiciary. In both of these cases, determining either a "general" climate, or the degree to which the elite culture may have coerced and influenced the common one, is problematic. There was probably no such thing as a homogeneous audience or jury.

For the Jacobean audiences at performances of Macbeth the term witchcraft evoked specific concepts, as Peter Corbin points out:

For Jacobean society witchcraft presented a real and frightening danger which posed a threat to everyone.... [M]any of those who attended the first performances... would have accepted the notion of the devil's direct intervention in the affairs of men and the attempt by individuals to invoke his personal assistance. (1)

Beliefs about witches, witchcraft, and the supernatural were indeed a vivid reality for the men and women of Elizabethan and Stuart England. According to the official elite theory, witches were believed to offer unqualified worship to the Devil and his agents. This worship, offered other than to God, was the most heinous of the witch offenses as far as the church and secular officials who persecuted them in England and on the Continent were concerned. It was perceived as heresy because it broke the baptismal covenant with God. For the ordinary villagers and peasants of the common culture the dominant characteristic of the witches was not their Devil worship, but their malevolence. These dogmas had earlier origins, but reached their peak during the Renaissance.

Witchcraft in England must be regarded separately from the rest of Europe because, for the time period of this study, English belief and practice followed quite different paths. In England the peasantry, dominated by Christian beliefs and the quest for salvation, had experienced the trauma of Henry VIII's recent break with Rome and the creation of the Church of England. The break with Rome meant the end of intercession through intermediaries such as the Virgin Mary. On the other hand, direct petitions to the deity were not always successful:

When prayers to the Christian God failed...the wise woman [witch] gave help with some concrete object by which beneficia might overcome the physical evidence of maleficia. (Robbins 160)

Many of the common culture came to perceive witchcraft as an alternative source of solace to that of Christianity.

The rapid development of printing, and of literacy, proved a profound factor in developing and moulding the witchcraft beliefs of the age. William Caxton had set up his printing press at Westminster in

1476. By 1550 the centre of the book trade had shifted to London, and stationers' shops had begun to spring up along Paternoster Row and in and around St. Paul's. From this time the reading public grew rapidly. Books provided the literate with increased awareness and understanding of contemporary witchcraft beliefs and incidents. Consequently the press dramatically widened the gap between the largely literate intellectual elite and the largely illiterate common culture. Prices were lower, and quantities and selections were greater, than ever before. The literate elite expanded their store of information and their communicative skills, while the illiterate common culture remained relatively static.

Attempts to empathize with the beliefs of the Shakespearean Age must take account of the strength and reality of its witchcraft tenets:

In the English countryside some interest in witchcraft had long predated the seventeenth century, as men attempted to explain mysterious disasters associated with crop failures and with disease and death amongst both animals and people....(Responsibility for misfortune was particularly directed towards old women, in reality harmless, but perhaps eccentric and suspect as the result of age or isolation. (Lawrence vii)

The witchcraft persecutions were based on the scapegoating of women concerning such things as unexplained illness and death of both people and livestock; sexual impotence; poor crops; bad weather; plague; war; mishaps in the manufacture of butter, cheese, and beer; crop blight; and famine. Given the strength of contemporary superstitions, condemning someone as a witch was neither uncommon nor difficult. Reginald Scot describes one common Scottish method of accusation which, he notes, was commended by Bodin:

A hollowe peece of wood or a chest is placed in the church into the which anybodie may freely cast a little scroll of paper, wherein may be contened the name of the witch, the time, place and fact etc. And the same chest being locked with three severall locks, is opened every fifteenth dale by three inquisitors...which keepe three severall kaes. And thus the accuser need not be knowne, nor shamed with the reproach of slander or malice to his poore neighbour. (Booke 2: Chapter 2)

The European witch-craze developed once the social and cultural climate required, supported, and nurtured it. Its onset and duration varied from nation to nation, and in different areas of the same nation:

The preconditions (re witchhunt) are a peasant economy, a witch-believing peasantry, and an active belief in the Devil among the educated. (Larner 1984:viii)

These provisos existed at the start of the period being presently examined. There were three fundamental doctrines of English Renaissance witchcraft beliefs. The first was "maleficium", the active enactment of evil against human beings. "In England the initial driving force was the fear of 'maleficium'" (Thomas 595). On this same topic, Lea quotes from Clavis Regia Sacerdotum Casuum Conscientiae, a 1615 work by Gregory Sayre, an English Benedictine who had been compelled to leave England:

Nor is their malice less than their cunning and from hatred of the human race they use every means to deceive and destroy those who apply to them. (Lea 1369)

The second doctrine was that of the "Demonic Pact", the witch's alliance with the Devil. At their trials witches often testified that the Devil had offered his services at their time of need. "The Devil conventionally made his first appearance when he heard the woman cursing" (Thomas 625). Satan seldom appeared himself, but rather sent a minor devil in some form to convert the nominee. If the woman succumbed and became a witch, this "imp" remained in attendance as her "familiar".

With the conclusion of the pact, the witch performed the ultimate act of homage and submission to the Devil, the "osculum obscenum". She also received the "witches mark", a supposed third teat to suckle her incubus devil. Reginald Scot reports on this aspect of the Demonic Pact:

The divell...giveth to everie novice a marke, either with his teeth or with his clawes, and so they kisse the divels bare buttocks, and depart: (Booke III: Chapt.iii)

The pervasiveness of this humiliating act of submission to the devil in witchcraft belief is reinforced in many Renaissance writings.

The following observation by Francesco Guazzo is typical:

Then they offer him pitch black candles, or infants' navel cords; and kiss him upon the buttocks in sign of homage. (35)

Christina Lerner also notes the structure and process of the Pact:

The witch became a witch by virtue of a personal arrangement with the Devil who appeared to his potential recruit in some physical form. At this meeting, in return for renunciation of baptism, services on earth and the soul of the witch at death, the Devil promised material advantages and magical powers. In addition, an integral part of the Christian witch theory was that the witch did not operate alone. Witchcraft involved midnight meetings to worship the Devil, to receive his orders and to have sexual intercourse with him or his subordinate spirits. (1984:3)

The statement that "witches did not operate alone" leads directly to the third major English witchcraft belief, the "Witches Sabbath". This was the meeting or gathering of covens of witches for orgies of evil. The main features were a bacchanalian feast, followed by a sexual debauch. Although sabbaths, celebrated by large groups of witches, were frequent throughout the year, there were six great festivals of the witch cult. These were Candlemas, February 2; May Eve, April 30; St. John's Eve, June 23; Lammas-tide, August 1; Halloween, October 31; and

St. Thomas's Day, December 21. All six of these dates relate to ancient pagan beliefs and also to significant feasts in the Church calendar. The parallels have led to conjecture that Renaissance witchcraft beliefs had their origins in an ancient fertility religion, but were given a Christian veneer as that new religion evolved.¹

Some two hundred years before Shakespeare, Geoffrey Chaucer provided a satiric commentary on the elimination of the ancient spirits by Christianity:

Al was this land fulfild of fayerye,
 The elf-queene, with hir joly compaignye...
 But now kan no man se none elves mo,
 For now the grete charitee and prayeres
 Of lymytours and othere hooly freres...
 This maketh that ther ben no fayeryes.
 For ther as wont to walken was an elf
 Ther walketh now the lymytour hymself...
 Wommen may go sauflly up and down.
 In every bussh or under every tree
 Ther is noon oother incubus but he.²
 (The Canterbury Tales "Wife of Bath's Tale" 859-880)

The old religion was given the pejorative label of "witchcraft" by its Christian enemies. The sabbath, in this context, degenerated from religious celebration to pagan festivals. At one time, for example, elves, brownies, gnomes, and trolls were all Scotch or Irish gods:

Upon the conversion of the inhabitants of Great Britain to Christianity, the native deities underwent the same inevitable fate, and sank into the rank of evil spirits.... To the last, communication with evil spirits was kept up by means of formulae and rites that are undeniably the remnants of a form of religious worship. (Spalding 24, 26)

Larner (1984:88) has summarized these major beliefs about witches into three types. Type A is "maleficium". This most simple and basic form includes both sorcery and witchcraft. There is a fundamental difference between the two activities. Sorcery is physical manipulation

of objects and/or verbal incantations. That is, sorcery is performed by means of explicit techniques that have been learned or acquired by the sorcerer. Witchcraft, on the other hand, causes harm through the malicious release of internal power. That is, it is done by means of an inherent or implicit power held by the witch:

Partly because of the heavy theological and moral influence of Christianity...the powers and techniques we are calling witchcraft and sorcery were usually viewed as harmful and anti-social...concepts of witchcraft as the pursuit of ends (usually harmful) by implicit means, and sorcery as the pursuit of ends (usually harmful) by explicit means. (Horsley 696)

Type B witchcraft is "compact witchcraft". Here the evil essence lies in the demonic pact with the Devil. The theory holds that it does not matter whether the power realized through the pact is used to harm or to heal. It is still satanic. Compact witchcraft, therefore, blurs the distinction between black and white magic, maleficium and healing.

Larner's Type C witchcraft is "sabbath witchcraft". It could be described as an extension of compact witchcraft but, in fact, the addition of the sabbath, the idea that witches, having made a pact with the Devil, combine with other witches to pay him homage, is commoner than the pact on its own. The manifestation of these three types of witchcraft in Macbeth is examined and discussed in chapter four.

In the earlier age of the late fifteenth century, the official theory of witchcraft contained four rather than three components. These pre-Renaissance concepts are listed by Horsley:

- i) 'Maleficium', or causing harm through supernatural means.
- ii) Flying through the air at night to desolate places for evil purposes such as eating babies.

- iii) Participating in a sect or cult which met in periodic "sabbats" to worship the Devil and engage in sexual orgies.
- iv) Making a pact with the Devil. (690)

While maleficium, the witches sabbath, and the demonic pact remained as the essential foundations of English Renaissance witchcraft beliefs, the "flying in air" concept lost its primacy. It remained, however, a significant component of the total belief. The witches' capacity to fly through the air was supposedly effected by anointing a broomstick, a chair, or the witch's body, with "Flying Ointment". The efficacy of flying ointment (unguent) is an abiding traditional belief.

Most of the numerous extant recipes for flying ointment include hallucinogenic herbs.² Several of the common components given in various extant recipes, such as hemlock, thornapple, henbane, and deadly nightshade, are poisonous and can produce hallucinations, including delusions of flying. Valiente reports on experiments with flying ointments that were conducted by Dr. Erich-Will Peuckert of the University of Gottingen, Germany, and a friend who was a solicitor by profession. They prepared ointment containing all of the aforementioned ingredients save hemlock, smeared themselves with it, and fell into a deep sleep. Awaking with violent hang-overs, they were amazed to discover that the dream experience of each had been virtually the same:

He dreamed of flying through the air, of landing on a mountain-top, and of wild orgiastic rites and the appearance of monsters and demons....Dr. Peuckert suggests this to be, in fact, the narcotic action of the salve, which automatically induces this kind of vision. (146-47)

It is altogether possible that when Renaissance witches used these unguents, hallucinogenic drugs were absorbed through breaks in their

skin or by osmosis. Given their mind set and expectations, many who used the ointments may genuinely have believed that they had flown.*

Because Shakespeare was writing for an English audience, about Scottish witches, a consideration of national differences in witchcraft perceptions is useful. Even though the essential tenets were similar, there were very significant variations between Continental, English, and Scottish beliefs and practices. Initially there were several dramatic differences between Continental and British witches, and within Britain there were also marked differences between English and Scottish witches. Many of the distinctions gradually blurred, however, as English witches took on more sinister and evil characteristics than they had originally possessed. This evolution peaked in 1603 with the accession of King James VI of Scotland to the English throne as James I.

Major initial differences between the Continental and the British witchcraft pictures included differences in the essential vision of the supernatural. There were also differences in the duration, techniques, and fervour of the persecutions. Similar differences between the English and the Scottish pictures must also be noted:

Within this wide range of the European experience of witchcraft, Scotland and England, despite their shared insularity, represent two quite distinct levels of intensity. Scottish witch beliefs should be placed fairly far up the scale of severity, being less intense than the German hunts but slightly more intense than the French or the Swiss. England should be placed fairly far down the scale, level with Denmark and Russia.... English beliefs had a more persistent demonic component than the Danish witch beliefs....Witchcraft in England was not unique; it was merely taken less seriously by the authorities than in some European countries, and more seriously than in some others. (Larner 1984:70-71)

Larner's observations about the differences in the nature of Continental versus English and Scottish witches are also worthy of note:

Continental witchcraft is essentially diabolic and English witchcraft is essentially about local malice. Popular belief was concerned with the particular act of 'maleficium' while the educated was concerned with the condition of being a witch....In England, the accused was normally tried for the offence of which she had first been accused. In Scotland, the original accusation was merely the trigger for the collection of evidence about the essential crime of being a witch. (Larner 1984:74-75)

The duration of the Continental witchhunt was three centuries, or more than twice that of the English. Compared with what happened to English witches, the trials and tortures of convicted Continental witches were much more severe. At their trials these women were shaved bald, stripped completely, and searched either before the Inquisitor or by him. Torture to extract a confession was allowed up to three times, with each time being more severe than the last. This gave rise to our contemporary expression, "the third degree". It refers to the third level of torture. Torture to elicit confessions of witchcraft was not allowed under English law. "There is no evidence that physical torture was ever officially allowed in England, except where treason was involved" (Macfarlane 20). It was, however, often practised in Scotland. "Scotland...did receive the full Continental demonology and became a persecuting state" (Larner 1984:4). Robbins has also commented on the differences between the two countries concerning the use of torture:

Scotland generally followed European rather than English traditions, and witches were severely tortured and burned, following a law attributed to King Kenneth I (died 860), which prescribed burning for those who invoked spirits.(505)

In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, most of the women accused of witchcraft were found guilty, whether tried by church

officials as on the Continent, by the judiciary as in England, or by combined civil and church authorities as in Scotland:

In contrast to continental practice, English witches were almost always examined by Justices rather than by officials of the church and the accused were usually examined on factual evidence rather than hearsay. Horrendous tortures, practised on the continent, to elicit confession and to determine guilt...were not common experience in England. The penalty, should a trial lead to conviction of a capital offence, was death by hanging, not by burning. (Corbin 2)

In keeping with Scotland's position, somewhere between England and the Continent, Scottish witches who were found guilty were either hanged or burned. Records that exist for the November 19, 1636 executions of William Coke and Alison Dick, his wife, include a careful accounting of the execution expenses.² This sharing of expenses is typical of the involvement of the Scottish clergy in the witch trials. While neither as fundamental nor intense as on the Continent, it was significantly more pronounced than in England:

In Scotland the clergy not only interrogated witches after their apprehension but collectively urged the government on several occasions to step up its witch-hunting operations. (Larner 1981:72)

The lack of financial benefits accruing from witch persecutions is seen by Hans Sebald as one of the major reason why English persecutions never reached the frenzy of activity that occurred on the Continent:

The pecuniary motive in witch-hunting was much more rampant in Continental Europe than on the British Isles.... The reason for the difference can be found primarily in the restraints that the English law imposed....[T]orture and confiscation of property were not allowed in England. By denying the economic bonus...the English version of the witch frenzy never reached the heights of its mainland counterpart. In addition, reduction of the economic incentive caused the English to accuse and prosecute proportionately far fewer men than women. (47)

There are wide variations in contemporary historical and literary writings about numbers executed for witchcraft. Precise counts exist for some local jurisdictions and specific trials, but national statistics were not kept. Thus it is very hard to learn the number of "witches" put to death in England, but there is no doubt the total was significant:

The main period for executions was 1559-1675: thereafter convictions became very rare. Within this period there were peaks in the 1580s and 1590s...and in 1645-7. (Belsey 1985:185)

Recent research in criminal and trial records seems to indicate that the numbers were between 500 and 1000 in England and something between 1000 and 1500 in Scotland. C. L'Estrange Even, for example, "'guesses' about 1000 witches were hanged during the whole period in England" (Robbins 180). Robbins cautions about the risk that Continental influences will lead to overestimating the numbers in England. He then quotes estimates ranging from a low of 3000 to a high of 70,000 to indicate the difficulty of arriving at a valid conclusion. There is little doubt that the number of executions in mainland Europe was much higher, both relatively and actually, than in England. The extreme upper estimate for all Europe over the 300 years of the witch-hunt is probably that given in The Burning Times where nine million are said to have been executed. Most other sources indicate that this total is inflated. Robbins, after remarking on the problems of obtaining accurate figures for Europe, gives an estimate that is probably much more realistic:

The Inquisition alone within the space of 150 years had burned 30,000 witches (quoted by Limborch, 1692). If an approximation of those executed as witches be insisted on, the most reliable suggestion is that of George L. Burr, who estimated a minimum of 100,000 men and women and children burned in Germany alone. One might double this figure for the whole of Europe. (180)

During Shakespeare's lifetime, societal and cultural beliefs in the supernatural encompassed a seemingly endless array of unique kinds of spirits, all bent on devastating the quality of life on earth, and on the ultimate assignation of man's eternal soul to the fires of hell. King James enhances this idea of diabolic malice when, speaking in the Daemonologie about the fallen angels, he says:

By the falling from the grace of God wherein they were created, they continued still thereafter...in wandering through the worlde, as Gods hangmen, to execute such turnes as he employes them in. (20)

A catalogue of some of the malicious spirits that roam the earth is presented by Reginald Scot, one of the earliest of the intellectual elite sceptics, in his book The Discoverie of Witchcrafte, discussed further in chapter 3. In considering the vast array of evil beings that have come to harass and assault the common Englishman, he observes, with the subtle humour that characterizes his work:

But in our childhood our mothers maids have so terrified us with an ouglie divell having hornes on his head, fier in his mouth, and a taile in his breech, eies like a bason, fanges like a dog, clawes like a beare, a skin like Niger, and a voice roring like a lion, whereby we start and are afraid when we heare one crie Bough: and they have so fraied us with bull-beggars, spirits, witches, urchens, elves, hags, fairies, satyrs, pans, faunes, sylens, kit-wi-the-cansticke, tritons, centaurs, dwarfes, gyants, impes, calcars, conjurors, nymphes, changelings, incubus, Robin good-fellowe, the spoorne, the mare, the man-in-the-oke, the hell-waine, the fierdrake, the puckle, Tom thombe, hob goblin, Tom-tumbler, boneles, and such other bugs, that we are afraid of our owne Shadowe. (Booke VII Chapt xv).

While Scot likely penned these lines with tongue-in-cheek, for the majority of his fellow citizens belief in the reality of supernatural beings was compelling. The witch was supreme in matters of absolute evil, and her nature and modes of behaviour were meticulously defined.

CHAPTER II

WHO WERE THE WITCHES?

In order to consider the witches in Macbeth in relation to English Renaissance convictions about their nature and activities, knowledge is required not only about those convictions, but also about their historical growth, development, and application. In addressing the fundamental nature of witches, several concepts need to be developed.

The terms witchcraft and sorcery, introduced in the previous chapter, are commonly treated as synonyms today. In fact they are quite different in meaning. Sorcery refers to a body of technical knowledge concerning occult powers, and the use of natural substances or things. Witchcraft, on the other hand, is the employment of the inner powers of an individual, usually for destructive purposes. For example, to bring about the death of an enemy a sorceress might torment a waxen image, whereas a witch would achieve the same result by a simple curse:

Witches can harm other human beings, their animals or crops, without performing any special acts; they can cause damage merely by a look or a malicious thought.... Sorcerers, on the other hand, have no such innate capacity for occult harm, but employ magical operations, such as chanting spells or performing certain ritual operations, to accomplish their ends. (Scarre 3)

The inner powers of a witch result from a pact with the Devil. Shakespeare's weird sisters are witches, but it needs to be kept in mind that witchcraft and sorcery are rarely found in isolation and that the lines between them are not precise, and neatly defined. "Fair is foul and foul is fair / Hover through the fog and filthy air" (I.1.11-12), can be read as either a witches' curse, or a sorceresses' incantation. The sisters practice both sorcery and witchcraft in Macbeth.

The historical actuality of the "white witch" is another matter that requires comment. From early times, these women filled very beneficial roles as protectors in the life of their communities. The white witch was known and trusted. Often the village midwife, she used her skills and "magic" in humane ways. She was the healer and comforter who soothed and allayed fears. She was also the repository of the traditional lore. Her magic was generally an amalgam of herbal remedies and common sense. Some time prior to the Renaissance, however, the status of the white witch did a complete about face. The impetus for the change was both civil and ecclesiastical:

Ecclesiastical law, after the year 900, punished curative sorcery or "white magic" with excommunication, resulting in execution by the civil authorities. The church view gradually prevailed. Jean Vincent (about 1475) wrote that those who used herbs for cures did so only through a pact with the Devil....In fact, the good witch came to be regarded by the theologians as a "more horrible and detestable monster" than the wicked witch. (Robbins 540)

The Church condemned every form of magic as usurping the powers that pertained to God alone. The white witch was consequently persecuted with as much vigour as any other.

The evil "black witch" of the Renaissance is the model for Shakespeare's witches. Historically, these women were usually old, feeble, ugly, eccentric, unattractive, malevolent, and scathingly vocal. Thomas notes, "Her curses and imprecations thus symbolized the accused witch's relationship to society" (625). The witches were invariably "unwomanly", and often widowed. Although they did have their male counterparts in wizards and warlocks, "93% of those executed in England were women" (Larner 1981:89). Those tried were usually from the lower social levels and were generally disdained by their neighbours:

Very few victims of English witch hunts were men and women of social standing. Most of them seem to have been members of families of village outcasts whose quarrels with their neighbours had resulted in an exceptional unpopularity. (King 80-81)

It is instructive to examine some of the common tests for witches, and proofs of witchcraft. The most damning of all such proofs was the presence of witches' marks, supposed teats to suckle the devil. Many persons were declared witches, and sent to the gallows, because of some wart, pustule, or unusual swelling. Although Matthew Hopkins, the infamous Witch Finder General of the mid-seventeenth century, had his own regular searcher, a woman named Goody Phillips, the more usual course was for the presiding Justice either to appoint a body of women to perform the search, or to do it himself.

Individuals known as "Prickers" were also important in proving that a woman was a witch. If the witch's mark was scratched or pricked by a pricker, and did not bleed or was insensitive to pain, the person was guilty, and clearly a witch. There is an oblique reference to this practice in Macbeth, when the second witch announces "By the pricking of my thumbs / Something wicked this way comes" (IV.i.59-60).

Facial hair was another indication that a woman might well be a witch. "The Weird Sisters could be taken by the audience as witches, as their beards suggested" (Muir 1972:143). Banquo's "You should be women / And yet your beards forbid me to interpret / That you are so" (I.ii.45-47), would confirm the sisters as witches for the Jacobean audience.

The most universal of all tests for a witch was, however, the test of water. In its simplest form, the accused would have her hands and feet bound crosswise, and would be thrown into a body of water. It was

believed that if she were a witch, the water would reject her just as she had rejected the water of baptism. If, therefore, she floated, she was retrieved, condemned, and executed. If she sank she was deemed innocent. In Macbeth the first witch announces, "But in a sieve I'll thither sail" (I.iii.8), and thereby proclaims she cannot sink. King James himself commented on both the witches mark and the water test:

There are two other good helps that may be used for their trial: the one is the finding of their marke, and the trying the insensibleness thereof. The other is their fleeting on the water. (Daemonologie 80)

These proofs and tests are discussed in many early writings, including one that was written by John Cotta, and published in the year of shakespeare's death.* It is a lengthy treatise. Specific reference to the tests discussed above is given in Chapter XIII (sic) titled, "The casting of Witches into the water, Scratching, Beating, Pinching, and drawing of blood of Witches". Beating a witch was calculated to make her body so unpleasant a residence that the evil spirit would leave.

There were both civil and religious institutional bases for the English witch-hunts and persecutions. Official concern with witchcraft in England goes back at least to AD 747 when the Council of Clovesho advised bishops to warn parishioners God's law forbids "soothsayers, auguries, auspices, amulets, spells, and all the filth of impious errors of the heathen" (Kittredge 27). The oldest English secular witch law seems to be that of Alfred the Great who reigned from 871 to 899. His law was based on God's law, and said, obviously reflecting Exodus 22:18, "The women who are wont to receive enchanterers and magicians and wizards or witches - thou shalt not suffer them to live" (Kittredge 27). Kittredge notes that the tenth-century laws of Edward and Guthrum, and

the eleventh-century law of Aethelred, forbade witchcraft on pain of death or banishment. He also says that, although records reveal that a woman was drowned in London in the tenth century for driving nails into an image of her husband, capital punishment for witchcraft was rare in England in the Middle Ages. The usual penalty was jail and the pillory.

The elite legal and political bases of witch persecutions in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England were provided by three main witchcraft statutes passed at various times by Parliament. The first was 33 Henry VIII, c. 8, in 1541-42. This Act is generally regarded as the beginning of active persecutions. Its main provisions state:

Be it enacted by the Kyng oure Soveraigne Lorde w'thassent of the Lordes...that yf any persone or persones...use devise practise or exercise, or cause to be used devysed practised or exercised, any Invocations or conjurations of Spirites wichecraftes enchauntmentes or sorceries...that then all and every suche Offence and Offences...shall have and suffer suche paynes of deathe losse and forfaytures of their landes teittles goodes and Catalles as in case of felonie by the course of the Common lawes of this Realme, and also shall lose p'vilege of Clergie and Sayntuarie.

(Statutes vol 3; card 39; page 837)

The Act of 1542 was repealed in 1547 by 1 Edw. VI, c. 12, which seems to have left the crime unpunished except by the Common Law until 5 Eliz., c. 16, was passed in March of 1563, the fifth year of her reign. Kittredge stresses this important statute when he notes that "The major Renaissance persecutions began when Elizabeth took the throne in 1558. With her accession agitation began for a new law" (282). The statute of 1563 was directed against persons who "use practise or exercise any Invocations or Conjurations of evill and wicked Spirites, to or for any Intent or Purpose;" (Statutes vol 4; Pt 1; Card 24; Page 446). It provided that all who:

(Shall use or practise anye Sorcery Enchantment Charme or Witchecraft...to provoke any person to unlawful love or to hurte or destroy any person in his or her Body...shall for the said offence suffer Imprisonement by the space of One whole yere...and once in every Quarter of the said yere shall in some Market Towne, upon the Marcket day...stand openly upon the Pillorie.

(Statutes vol 4; Pt 1; Card 24; Page 446)

The emphasis in this bill, as in its predecessor, was on the maleficent nature of the witch's activities. "The second witchcraft statute, passed in 1563...also laid its emphasis upon the maleficent nature of the witch's activities" (Thomas 526). The act was stronger than its predecessor because it made the invocation of evil spirits a felony per se, no matter what the purpose. The death penalty applied for a first conviction only when the evil resulted in the death of a human being, but any second conviction brought the hangman. This aspect of the law has been summarized by Corbin:

English judicial attitudes and practice towards witchcraft were comparatively tolerant compared to those common on the continent and in Scotland. It was not until 1563 that the first comprehensive act was specifically directed towards witchcraft and, significantly, although bewitching to death attracted the death penalty, injuring persons or goods or cattle and seeking treasure, warranted only prison and pillory for the first offenses; the second conviction, however, rendered the criminal liable to execution. (2)

In this same year a comparable witchcraft statute was passed in Scotland, under Mary, Queen of Scots. It reflected Scottish beliefs and practices, including the severity of punishment for those found guilty:

The wording is very vague and witchcraft seems to imply sorcery (beneficia or maleficia) or fortunetelling: the one who seeks such help is culpable along with the witch.... Under the pain of death as well to be execute against the user, abuser, as the seeker of the response or consultation. (Robbins 341)

In 1566, three years after the passage of the Elizabethan Act, the first witchcraft execution of the English Renaissance was carried out. It is ironic that this year also saw the birth of James I and VI under whose reigns so many more "witches" would be condemned and executed.

In 1604, less than one year after the accession of James I to the English throne, the Elizabethan Act was repealed. It was replaced by 1 Jas. I., c. 12, the third and most enduring, of the witchcraft statutes. This Act provided that:

If any person...shall use, practise or exercise any Invocation or Conjuratiō of any evill and wicked Spirit, or shall consult covenant with entertain employ feede or rewarde any evill and wicked Spirite to or for any intent or purpose; or take up any dead man woman or child out of his her or theire grave...to be imployed or used in any manner of Witchcrafte Sorcerie Charme or Inchantment... shall suffer pain of deathe as a Felon and shall loose the priviledge and benefit of Clergie and Sanctuarie.

(Statutes vol 4; Pt 2; Card 12; Page 1028)

The Act was passed, and was not repealed for one hundred and thirty-two years. It is generally conceded to be more severe than Elizabeth's act because the death penalty was applied for the first offence rather than the second. Whereas, under the Elizabethan law, the death of the victim had to have occurred, this new law held it a felony if the victim was merely injured. It also made it a felony, for the first time in English law, to exhume a dead body or body part for diabolic purposes. The aspect of the law that forbade consulting or nurturing any evil and wicked spirit for any reason was directed expressly at the fostering of familiars:

Michael Dalton, in the first edition of his Cowntrey Justice (a legal handbook...) lists the familiar as the first evidence against witches, and the teat sucked by the familiar as the second. (Rosen 331)

With this law, the English emphasis moved from the maleficium of the first two Acts, to the diabolic pact. This made the English doctrine practically parallel to the Continental creed. It is notable, however, that unlike the practice on the Continent, English witchcraft was always treated as an anti-social crime rather than as heresy.

Macbeth's visit to the witches, and his importuning of the necromancy in Act IV, Scene 1, would have assured his death had he been tried and convicted under any one of the English and Scottish laws just discussed. This fact would not have escaped the Jacobean audiences.

The second major justification for witchcraft persecutions, and indeed a major impetus for the civil Acts and Statutes, was elite religious belief, and the active encouragement and involvement of the Church. Many contemporary religious books and writings supported, and gave impetus to, the process of the witch craze. The first and most significant of these was the Bible, for the Renaissance was an age when Holy Scripture had preeminent authority. The Bible had always been the supreme Christian text. It contains many injunctions and attributions that gave rise to a host of secondary documents. The response to witchcraft, beginning as early as Alfred the Great's ninth-century law, rested almost entirely on one prescriptive biblical command:

Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live. (Exodus 22:18)

The ascendancy of this short, simple, and precise directive is typified by its central position on the title page of Matthew Hopkins's influential 1647 treatise, The Discoverie of Witches. 't is ironic that this command, the most useful of all to the witch-hunters, resulted from a translation error. The biblical authors translated the Hebrew

word "chasaph" as "witch" whereas the true meaning of the word is "poisoner". "The word translated as 'witch' is the Hebrew chasaph, which means a poisoner" (Valiente 41). A second biblical injunction is similarly derived:

...to obey is better than sacrifice...For rebellion
is as the sin of witchcraft. (I Samuel 15:22,23)

Here, through the analogy of the female witch, we have the negative association of women and rebellion. Macbeth would certainly have brought this biblical charge into vivid focus for the Jacobean audiences, since witches are presented in the first scene, and rebellion is presented in the second. Lady Macbeth's part in rebellion against the king would also have been apparent. (Rebellions that would bring this injunction into vivid focus for James are discussed in Chapter three.)

In the King James bible, the words witch, familiars, familiar spirits, sorcery, sorcerers, and other terms associated with the supernatural and diabolic, are found in many different places:⁷

The Authorised Version of the Bible was produced in the time of King James I, a monarch who fancied himself as an authority on witchcraft, while at the same time being much afraid of it. To gratify the King, numerous references to witchcraft were worked in to the translation, which the original does not justify. (Valiente 40-41)

Exodus 22:18 was the major justification for a German witchcraft text that, soon after its publication in 1486, made its way into the legal lexicons of most other European countries, including England. This most prominent, important, and authoritative of all contemporary witchcraft journals - second only to the Bible - was the Malleus Maleficarum of Heinrich Kramer and James Sprenger, which served both political and religious objectives. The authors were Benedictine Monks,

and Inquisitors. Kramer was, in addition, the Prior of Cologne. This great textbook of the Inquisition was easily the most notable of all Renaissance witchcraft chronicles. The book sets out how witchcraft may be discovered and how it should be punished. It comprises a detailed and precise how-to-do-it handbook on the nature, identification, apprehension, trial, and execution of witches.

Known as the "Hexenhammer", or "The Hammer of the Witches", the Malleus was an essential component of the social response to witchcraft, witches, women, and the supernatural. It exerted a strong influence on witch trials, and is a monument to the contemporary rage against witches. A second impetus for its publication was the December 5, 1484 Papal Bull of Innocent VIII, "Summis desiderantes affectibus" (Summers 531; Robbins 263), with its precise condemnation of, "Intercourse with demons, Incubi et Succubi". Issued in the first year of Innocent's papacy, it was reprinted in the front of the Malleus.

This first edition of the Malleus was published in 1486, receiving its Approbation from a large, prestigious committee of church and secular dignitaries at the University of Cologne on May 19, 1487. It was translated and published almost immediately in both Italian and French, and quickly became the supreme "anti-witch" document in those countries also. From 1486 to 1669 there were at least thirty editions. The Introduction to the last (1948) edition summarizes its history:

The Malleus was thus...spread broadcast over Europe. In fact, it fastened on European jurisprudence for nearly three centuries the duty of combating the Society of Witches. The Malleus lay on the bench of every judge, on the desk of every magistrate. It was the ultimate, irrefutable, unarguable authority. It was implicitly accepted not only by Catholic but by Protestant legislature.

(viii)

The guarantee of authority for the Malleus Maleficarum was of the highest order. For most of the Continent it came from the Catholic Church, which meant from God himself. In England its authority came both from organized religion, and from other intellectual elites:

The craze to persecute witches caught fire in the fifteenth century and flamed across Europe into the seventeenth century....One very powerful force behind the witch-hunting craze in England was organized religion, because its...monopoly was threatened. Rome had fought witchcraft because it competed with the magic the church dispensed through priestly intercession with holy figures. The Reformation denied Church magic to Englishmen, so they turned to the supernatural witches and warlocks.
(Rosenberg 227)

It is one of many inexplicable ironies of the English witch-hunt that, although many Englishmen were violently anti-Catholic, they seized upon this particular document as though it were one of their own.

The third and last of the religious writings that will be considered here is one by John Knox. The importance of the widely read pamphlets in shaping opinions and beliefs of the Renaissance cannot be over-emphasized. It is probably no coincidence that in 1558, the year that Elizabeth's reign commenced, a caustic pamphlet was produced by Knox. This widely read treatise was, The First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women:

The Holy Ghost doth manifestly (say): I suffer not that women usurp authority over men: he sayeth not, that woman usurp authority over her husband, but he nameth man in general, taking from her all power and authority, to speak, to reason, to interpret or to teach, but principally to rule or to judge in the assembly of men. So that woman by the law of God and the interpretation of the holy ghost is utterly forbidden...what he hath assigned to man, whom he appointed and ordained as his lieutenant in earth; secluding from that honour and dignity all women....A woman...is a monster in nature, contumely to God, and a thing most repugnant to his will and ordinance. (Pitt 22-23)

Biblical directives, the harangues of churchmen like Knox, and the pronouncements of the Malleus Maleficarum, are but three specific examples, from primary sources, of the misogyny and witch-mania that were integral tenets of much of the populace in Shakespeare's England.

It is appropriate to consider selected witchcraft trials and executions in England during the period being presently examined. Such historical understanding is essential if one is to develop empathy with the perceptions of contemporary Macbeth audiences. It is also argued that Shakespeare would not have been ignorant of them. For these cases the framework is from the first Renaissance witch execution in England, that of Mother Agnes Waterhouse in 1566, to Shakespeare's death in 1616.

Over the span of a very few years three witch trials took place at Chelmsford in Essex, a most active county during the English Renaissance witch-hunt. The first was held in 1566, two years after Shakespeare's birth. Information about it is contained in a 1566 pamphlet by John Philip.²⁰ One of the defendants, Elizabeth Francis, had given a fifteen-year old cat named Sathan, reputedly a familiar, to a second defendant, sixty-three year old Mother Agnes Waterhouse. The cat has been the familiar of choice from early Egyptian witch belief (Valiente 54). For the Jacobean audience Graymalkin, the first witch's cat, would have been a reflection of this belief. The emphasis on the witch's familiar was much more pronounced in English trials than in those on the Continent. The concern with familiars had its justification in the biblical account of the Witch of Endor, "a woman that hath a familiar spirit" (I Samuel 28:7). "The keeping of a familiar devil in animal form was the most

common popular sign of a witch" (Rosen 331).

Mother Waterhouse's eighteen-year old daughter Joan was also a defendant in this trial. The chief witness against both was Agnes Browne, a twelve-year old neighbour. (This use of very young children as witnesses, a hallmark of many English trials, was part of the reason King James, in the latter years of his English reign, changed his feelings about witches.) Agnes Waterhouse was found guilty on July 27, 1566, and two days later became the first woman executed in England for witchcraft under the statute of 1563. At this same time Elizabeth Francis and Joan Waterhouse were both released. The pamphlet gives details of Agnes's last confession on the scaffold, and then concludes:

For these and many other offenses whiche shee hathe comytted, done and confessed, shee bewayled, repented, and asked mercy of God, and all the worlde forgyuenes and thus she yelded vp her sowle, trusting to be in joye with Christe her Saulour, which dearely had bought her with his most precious bloudde. Amen. (Marshburn 1971:49)

There are many more trials reported in a variety of pamphlets and other documents of the day. Robbins (168) highlights twelve major trials that were reported in pamphlets during Shakespeare's lifetime, and adds that there were "hundreds" during the English witch-hunts:

Other celebrated trials held at Chelmsford need only brief mention here. They show the continuity and tenacity of witch beliefs and witch hunting, once it had established itself. (Robbins 93)

The second of the Chelmsford trials took place thirteen years later, in 1579, when Shakespeare was fifteen years old. Details of this trial are given in a pamphlet whose author, as with so many of the pamphlet, is unknown.⁹ In 1589 the third Chelmsford trial took place. It is also described in detail in a current pamphlet.¹⁰ At this time

Shakespeare was twenty-five years old. All of these trials are similar in the status of the parties involved, and in the testimony of young children. In their confessions the witches discuss their familiars, and how they were recruited by the Devil. The trials reveal once again the emphasis on the witches' familiars that was so evident in English trials. The familiars in Macbeth would have reinforced this public concern. The speed with which "justice" was meted out is revealed in the following quotation from the 1589 pamphlet account:

After they had received their judgments, they were conveyed from the bar back again to prison, where they had not stayed above two hours, but the officers prepared themselves to conduct them to the place of execution. To which place they led them. (Rosen 188)

Although this assize concluded the sixteenth-century Chelmsford trials, it did not mark the end of persecutions for that town. In 1645 nineteen more women were hanged at Chelmsford for witchcraft (Lawrence viii).

In 1582, between the second and third Chelmsford trials, there occurred, at the little Essex fishing village of St. Osyth, a succession of perhaps the most infamous of all English witch trials. The testimony of 38 persons was heard. Sixteen women were charged, and the trials were filled with accusations and counter-accusations of witchcraft, incest, the nurturing of familiars, and a variety of maleficia. Witches' marks figured prominently in much of the testimony. The main pamphlet that describes these trials identifies the author only by the initials W.W.¹¹ It is now generally believed that "W.W." is the presiding Justice, Brian Darcey (Summers 123), a man who was evidently desperate for recognition. The strongest proof of his authorship is the frequent use of the pronoun

"me" in contexts where it obviously refers to the Justice. The pamphlet is very long, and contains detailed accounts of individual interrogations. That it is dedicated to Lord Brian Darcey can be construed as further evidence he was the author. This pamphlet, and a plethora of other written records about these trials, provides a potentially rich resource from which aspects of the common culture's beliefs and practices might be abstracted. Concerning the St. Osyth trials "It seems to have been a tradition that thirteen were executed" (Notestein 388). At this time Shakespeare was eighteen years old.

This brief history of selected trials is presented in order to establish the fact that there was definitely a climate of belief concerning witchcraft during Shakespeare's lifetime. The trials took place during his youth and early manhood. In view of the wide publicity that was accorded all of these Elizabethan trials through various communication modes including pamphlets, broadsides, and ballads, and in view of Shakespeare's acknowledged appetite for reading and learning, it is inconceivable that he was not vividly aware of them and of his society's ideas about the nature and process of witchcraft. This is not to say that he believed in or condoned them, but only that he knew of them. The pamphlets were widely distributed and widely read. Robbins says the 1566 trial was "the first to be presented in a topical and sensational chapbook, heralding hundreds of successors in the next two centuries" (88).

William Shakespeare died on April 23, 1616. It was noted earlier that the first English Renaissance execution for witchcraft occurred when he was two years old. Now, in the year of his death, the craze was still in full fury, and would continue for another sixty-six years:

1616. Leicester. Nine women hanged on the accusation of a boy. Six others accused, one of whom died in prison, five released after the king's examination of the boy.
(Notestein 398)

Considering the permeating influence of witchcraft beliefs throughout his lifetime, the wonder is not that Shakespeare made references to witchcraft and the diabolic in many of his plays, but rather that in relatively few of them did he include more than limited treatment.¹² Witch persecutions, trials, and executions were a vivid reality for Shakespeare throughout his lifetime:

Trials and executions continued throughout the Parliamentary period and the Restoration. The last execution for witchcraft in England probably took place at Exeter in 1682. Although the common people hated witches as much as ever, judges were no longer inclined to give credence to their accusations. (Marshburn 1973:78)

William Shakespeare was the attached writer for the same company of actors for all of his London career. The company, initially known as The Lord Chamberlain's Men, became The King's Men when, in 1603, its nine principal shareholders, including Shakespeare, were granted a royal charter to be the dramatic company of King James. This honour entitled them to wear the king's royal livery. With such royal patronage the company would have been most anxious to please James. Macbeth, known variously as the Royal Play, or the Play of the King, was written and performed with him very much in mind.

CHAPTER III

KING JAMES I AND VI OF ENGLAND AND SCOTLAND

The second major influence on the production of Macbeth, concurrent and interrelated with Renaissance witchcraft beliefs, was King James. One of Shakespeare's greatest political concerns was with the qualities required for ideal kingship. In the play, Malcolm articulates such qualities to Macduff:

The king-becoming graces,
As Justice, Verity, Temp'rance, Stableness,
Bounty, Perseverance, Mercy, Lowliness,
Devotion, Patience, Courage, Fortitude. (IV.iii.91-4)

Shakespeare appears to have derived this catalogue from James I's description of regal qualities in his Basilikon Doron (1599). This work was James's "kingly gift" to his son Henry, the Prince of Wales, who was being groomed as the future king. It was James's political testament to instruct Henry in manners, morals, and the ways of kingship:

His education for kingship had been carefully planned by his father who, in the years before he came into his English kingdom, had penned for his guidance the famous Basilikon Doron laying down precepts and principles to guide his son when he came to reign. (Akriqg 1962:128)

In the Basilikon, James exhorts the Prince, as the patriarchal aim, "to win all mens hearts to a loving and willing obedience". In this initially private, didactic injunction to his son, his concern with witchcraft is still manifest. The nature of the other "horrible crymes" lumped with witchcraft gives strong evidence of the royal loathing:

But as this seuere just'ce of yours uppon all offences would be but for a time (as I haue alreadie saide) so is there some horrible crymes that yee are bounde in Conscience neuer to forgiue: Such as Witch-craft, wilfull murder, Incest (especiallie within the degrees of consanguinitie) Sodomie, Poysoning and false coyne. (McIlwain 37-8)

This work, like his other writings, supports the fact that James was an avid proponent of the Divine Right of Kings, and the king as God's lieutenant on earth. James claims the God-given Divine Right of Kings, but he transforms its demand of paternal love and willing obedience into "fatherly authority". This ensures that the royal will is absolute, and subjects have no grounds for rebellion, akin to the biblical sin of witchcraft. The concept of rebellion permeates Macbeth, which begins with the rebellion of Macdonwald, and continues through the rebellion of Macbeth. The theory of Divine Right places royal prerogative outside the domain of law:

It was not the witch theory that James had been incubating during his fearful and clergy-ridden youth; it was the doctrine of the divine right of kings. (Larner 1984:13)

The matter of succession as one aspect of the Divine Right was paramount in James's thinking. This preeminence is logical since it constituted the main basis of his claim to the English throne. His mother was Mary Queen of Scots, born 1542 and executed at Elizabeth's order on February 8, 1587. His great grandparents were Henry VIII's sister, Margaret (1489-1541), and James IV of Scotland. His attachment to the Divine Right is reflected in the first two lines of the sonnet with which he begins the Basilikon. "God giues not Kings the stile of Gods in valne, / For on his Throne his Scepter doe they swey." The doctrine is reflected again in his salutation "To Henry My Dearest Sonne, and Natvral Svccessovr". Shakespeare was acutely aware of James's views. Succession is a central theme in Macbeth, the "play of the king". This is evinced in Macbeth's anguish over his lack of an heir. "Upon my head they plac'd a fruitless crown, / And put a barren

sceptre in my gripe, / ...No son of mine succeeding" (III.1.60-63). Shakespeare's most blatant deference to James's right is, however, in the show of eight kings and Banquo. Macbeth queries, "What, will the line stretch out to th' crack of doom?" (IV.1.132), and provides his own answer with "Some I see, / That two-fold balls, and treble sceptres carry" (IV.1.135-36). Kings of Scotland were crowned with one sceptre and one orb. English kings were crowned with two sceptres and one orb (Brooke 177n). These lines pay homage to James's unifying the kingdoms, and to the unbroken line of the Stuart kings. "For the blood-baltered Banquo smiles upon me, / And points at them for his" (IV.1.138-39).

Prince Henry, unlike his father, seems to have possessed and practised the "king-becoming graces" in large measure. He was popular and much loved by the common people. In this respect, Akrigg informs us:

The people of Great Britain were justly proud of their new Prince of Wales. Serious and courageous, candid and high-minded, loyal to his friends and devoted to honour, Prince Henry seemed to epitomize the princely ideal. He was indeed the...seemingly nonpareil among princes. (1962:12^a)

In the show of eight kings and Banquo, the early Macbeth audiences would surely have projected Henry onto the mirror held by Banquo to reflect the continuing line of the Stuarts. He was their Prince of Wales, and their hope for the future. In later performances this scene would have produced feelings of loss and remorse because, tragically, Henry developed a brief and painful illness. He died on November 5, 1612, apparently from typhoid fever. His death, at age nineteen, not only depressed the nation with a sense of great loss, but also must have emphasised the many less-than-kingly attributes of his father. It is interesting to speculate about what the course of English history in

general, and English witch persecutions in particular, might have been if Henry IX had come to the throne.

James's obsession with witchcraft derived from many sources. From the fourteenth to the seventeenth centuries there were, in England, a great many widely publicised, contemporary incidents involving witches and royal elites. Each episode contributed to English witchcraft beliefs, and would have contributed to the development of James's witch phobia. In Coventry for example, in 1324, John of Nottingham, a famous necromancer, was paid by several of the city's richest, most influential burgesses "a large sum of money to undertake the slaying of King Edward II" (Summers 81). John attempted to comply by fashioning and tormenting a wax image.

In 1376, during the "Good Parliament", the physician to Alice Perrers, Edward III's mistress, was arrested on charges of confecting love philtres. "Her power over Edward was attributed to Witchcraft, and orders were issued for the apprehension of the necromancer who aided her wiles" (Summers 101):

In 1406 when Henry IV was informed that the diocese of Lincoln was infested by sorcerers, wizards, magicians, necromancers, diviners, and soothsayers of every sort, he sent a letter dated 2 January to the Bishop, Philip Repington...requiring him to search for any such occult practisers and straightway commit them to prison.

(Summers 102-03)

Even England's great warrior king was not free from the spectre of witchcraft. "Henry V, in the autumn of 1419, prosecuted his stepmother, Joan of Navarre, for attempting to kill him by witchcraft, 'in the most horrible manner that one could devise'" (Halleys v).

In 1441, in the reign of Henry VI, the Duchess of Gloucester, the ambitious wife of Henry's uncle, the Protector of England, consulted a witch in order to further her own ambitions. "Among the charges brought against Margery Jourdain, the famous witch of Eye, was that she prepared 'medecines and drynkis'...to enforce the foresaid Duke of Gloucester to love and to wedde" (Reed 77). The Duchess was later arraigned for conspiring with a notorious necromancer to procure the death of the young monarch by sorcery. Her intent was that her husband, the Duke, might succeed to the throne. The witch was arrested and executed. "The witch...was 'burn't to Ashes', since her offence was high treason" (Malleus v). The necromancer, who had made images to accomplish the king's murder, was "condemned by the King's Bench to be hanged and quartered" (Reed 76). This politically motivated episode was dramatized by Shakespeare in 2 Henry VI. The play depicts the Duchess planning with a priest named John Hum, (I.ii.70-107), to meet "With Margery Jourdain, the cunning witch, / With Roger Bolingbroke, the conjuror" (I.ii. 75-76). Two scenes later the audience is party to their meeting with the Duchess and Hum (I.iv.1-55). This scene depicts the actual conjuration of a spirit.

When Richard III seized the throne in 1483, he swore that his brother, Edward VI, had been forced to marry Lady Elizabeth Grey through witchcraft, and that Edward's later death had been encompassed by the same forces, through the agency of Edward's mistress, Jane Shore. "Marriage betwixt...Edward and Elizabeth Grey was made...by sorcerie and witchcraft....Jane Shore was charged with sorcery by the Protector, Richard of Gloucester " (Summers 110).

In these incidents, and in numerous others that might have been cited, the witches were creatures of flesh and blood, practising black arts with the aid of demons to foster regicide and the disruption of the realm. The events were political, and the intent was maleficium. These incidents would have been known to the well-educated James, and would have reinforced for him the homogeneity of witches, regicide, and rebellion. It is certain Shakespeare was also well versed in these histories. General public knowledge of them would have supported and sustained existing cultural beliefs. For the Jacobean audience Shakespeare's witches would have been completely credible, and would have reinforced their convictions about women, witches, and witchcraft. These beliefs formulated a vivid reality for the men and women of Elizabethan and Stuart England. Any attempt to empathize with Jacobean cultural beliefs must take into account the strength and reality of witchcraft tenets in those days. All classes were affected and concerned, from the mightiest to the humblest. Two distinct but interdependent forces converged to maintain the status quo. The first was political, while the second was religious.

The political force was manifest most completely in the person and court of James I. The long history of maleficium directed against ruling monarchs made him virtually paranoid about witchcraft, especially during his Scottish and early English reigns. The religious force was manifest in the established church, that is, the Church of England.

Until well into the later years of his reign in England, King James I and VI was a confirmed believer in witchcraft. The English government had been concerned since 1300 with witches and sorcerers,

because they might attempt to kill the king. Since the king was God's representative on earth, it was deemed only natural that he would be a prime target for the devil's arts and evil intrigues. There was even concern about prophets and astrologers because they might forecast the hour of the King's death.

There can be little doubt that James's uncompromising attitude toward witches and witchcraft was hardened and confirmed by two rebellions that preceded his accession to the English throne. The first, the Bothwell Conspiracy, happened in 1590. Comment on this conspiracy is contained in the document, News From Scotland.¹² This 1591 pamphlet relates how witchcraft placed King James in mortal danger on his voyage from Denmark with his new Queen in 1590.

Francis Stewart, the Fifth Earl of Bothwell, was the nephew and godson of James's mother, Mary Queen of Scots. As James's cousin, he had ambitions to succeed him on the Scottish throne. Hoping to achieve this objective, he is said to have enlisted the aid of a coven, the North Berwick Witches, to encompass James's death by drowning. They attempted to raise a violent storm by sorcery just as James's ship was entering the Firth of Forth on his return from Denmark in 1590 with his bride. The accepted method of raising such a storm was to throw a christened cat, tied to human body parts, into the water. This conjuration was depicted by Agnes Tompson, chief of the coven, during her trial and her interrogation by James himself. News From Scotland tells how:

She confessed that at the time when his Majestie was in Denmarke, she...took a Cat and christened it, and afterwards bound to each parte of that Cat the cheefeste partes of a dead man, and severall joynts of his bodie, and that in the night following the saide Cat was conveied into the midst of the sea by all these witches sayling their riddles or Clives

(sleues)...there did arise such a tempest in the Sea, as a greater hath not beene seene....Again it is confesed that the said christened Cat was the cause that the Kings Majesties Ship at his comming foorth of Denmarke, had a contrary winde to the rest of his Shippes...and further the said witche declared, that his Majestie had never come safely from the Sea, if his faith had not prevailed above their ententions. (Akrigg 1963:13; Rosen 196-97)

When this project failed, plans were made to poison the king. The scheme was discovered, and it was proven that Bothwell was Grand Master of a coven of more than one hundred witches, all expert at poisoning and all anxious to do away with the king. Trial evidence showed that the witches held meetings in North Berwick church. On one occasion over 200 attended, led by Bothwell. They were first suspected when David Seaton, the deputy-bailiff of Tranent, ten miles from Edinburgh, became aware that one of his servants, Gilly Duncan, had acquired a local reputation as a healer. Deeming her power of healing must come from the Devil, Seaton interrogated her, jerking her head with a rope tied round it, using the pilliwinks (thumbscrew) to crush her fingers, and examining her for the devil's mark. Predictably, the maid confessed that she was a witch, and that her cures were with the aid of devils. This conformed with the Scottish view of the diabolic pact. Only after her confession did Seaton turn her over to the authorities. Gilly also named sundry associates, including Agnes Sampson, a midwife and healer known as the 'Wise Wife of Keith'. Agnes Sampson was identified as the chief witch. The torture to which she was subjected is a revelation of the horrors of the Scottish witch-hunt:

Agnes Sampson...was examined at Holyrood Castle by King James himself. "She stood stiffly in the denial of all that was laid to her charge." So Agnes had "all her hair shaven off, in each part of her body," was roughly searched, and a devil's mark discovered in the

pudenda. She was fastened to the wall of her cell by a witch's bridle...kept without sleep...thawed with a rope about her head...Only after these ordeals did Agnes Sampson confess to the fifty-three indictments against her.

(Robbins 359-60)

Gilly Duncan also implicated several others, including Euphemia MacCallum, the respectable daughter of a peer; Margaret Thomson; Robert Grierson; Richard Graham, a noted warlock; Barbara Napier; and Dr. John Plan, the local schoolmaster at Saltpans. "There seems no doubt that Plan was the ringleader of this motley gang, and he has been described as 'nothing less than a Scottish Dr Faustus'" (Watson 130). All of the accused initially protested their innocence, but after severe torture they confessed to all charges, including high treason. The charges of treason were levelled for attempting to murder the king by sinking his ship, and for later attempts to poison him by extracting magic venom from the body of a black toad. The poison was to be smeared on a piece of the King's used clothing in order to poison him by sympathetic magic. In Macbeth a toad is the first and most completely described ingredient of the cauldron (IV.1.4-9). Paddock is often considered to be a toad.

The king imprisoned the Earl, and planned his banishment. On April 15, 1591, Bothwell was charged with conspiring with the sorcerer Ritchie Graham. Barbara Napier was arraigned on May 8, 1591 and pleaded pregnancy. Courts were commonly reluctant to sentence a pregnant woman to execution, so to James's great exasperation she was acquitted. She was convicted of consulting with witches, however, and was left to the king's pleasure. Horrified that Bothwell had schemed with such witches and warlocks, the king resolved that they should all die. In 1591 he wrote to John Maitland, Lord Thirlestane, his Chancellor:

Try, by the medeciner's oaths, if Barbara Napler
 be with bairn or not. Take no delaying answer. If ye
 find she be not, to the fire with her presently and
 cause bowel [disembowel] her publicly. Let Effie Makkailen
 [Euphame MacCallum] see the stoup * "two or three days and
 upon the sudden stay her in hope of confession if that
 service adverts. If not, despatch her the next oulke
 anis [next week sometime] but not according to the rigour
 of the doom. The rest of the inferior witches, off at the
 nail with them. But gar see that Richie Grahme [Ritchie
 Graham] want not his ordinary allowance till I take farther
 order with him....Farewell, for I am weary of writing.

(Akrlgg 1984:114-15)

* the whipping post.

Euphame MacCallum was found guilty on nine counts of witchcraft, including two of treason against the King's person. She met death by burning, without the "mercy" of strangulation first, "burned in ashes alive to the death", on July 25, 1591. After interrogation by James himself, Ritchie Graham was strangled and burnt at the Cross, Edinburgh, February 28, 1592, "with many of the others accused" (Robbins 361). Bothwell escaped from Edinburgh Castle. For the next three years he made James's life miserable with plots and attempted coups. James, in his neurotic insecurity, became obsessed about this reckless enemy. After three years, Bothwell escaped permanently from Scotland.

Dr. John Fian, who had withdrawn an earlier confession, was subjected to the most cruel and inhuman torture. Even though he did not re-confess, the pamphlet tells that he was still condemned:

Whereupon he was put into a cart, and, being first strangled, he was immediately put into a great fire being ready provided for that purpose, and there burnt in the Castle Hill of Edinburgh on a Saturday in the end of January last past, 1591. (Rosen 202)

There is little doubt that this experience of the North Berwick Witches was one factor (not the major one) that roused James to write his Daemonologie, published in Edinburgh in 1597. He gave its purpose:

Thereby, so farre as I can, to resolute the doubting
 harts of many; both that such assaultes of Sathan are
 most certainly practized, & that the instrumentes
 thereof, merits most severly to be punished. (2)

The second rebellion that solidified James in his attitudes toward witches and witchcraft was the Gowrie Conspiracy in 1600, led by the Earls of Gowrie and Ruthven. A myth grew out of this conspiracy against the life of King James. After the failure of the scheme, and slaughter of the Earl of Gowrie, the King searched his pockets and found a little parchment bag full of magic charms and talismans. The story circulated that after the Earl's death, his wounds did not bleed until his magic charms were removed, after which, "the blood gushed out in great abundance" (Adelman 112). This myth is another example of Jacobean belief in witchcraft's power.

These two incidents have been discussed to help explain James's active involvement in the witch hunts, and also to show the perception his subjects would have had of him as an intrepid witch fighter. In truth, the conspiracies and his knowledge of the histories discussed previously terrified James. After the conspiracies he was convinced that witchcraft was a horrible reality, an ominous, ever-existing presence, and an authentic threat. Fear made him an ardent champion of witch hunts and executions. There is no question about the psychological effect James's beliefs and activities had on his subjects. His attitudes supported witchcraft beliefs, and encouraged witch persecutions:

If James was alarmed by women in general, he was terrified of witches in particular....During his reign there was much feverish persecution of supposed witches - a constant and sobering reminder to all women that if they appeared in any way eccentric, independent or especially gifted, they might well be burned at the stake. (Pitt 32)

These were the attitudes that James brought to the English throne in 1603. They were at their fullest when Macbeth was written in 1606. The play's compounding of women, witchcraft, witches, evil, and rebellion, would have depicted the natural order of things as far as James was concerned. Whether or not Shakespeare himself believed in witchcraft is almost impossible to ascertain but, undeniably, he presented contemporary beliefs in his play.

It was inevitable that sceptics would eventually question these beliefs. One of the first statements of doubt was Reginald Scot's 1584 publication, The Discoverie of Witchcraft. Scot's sudden, intense interest in witchcraft was triggered by the Saint Osyth trials and executions in 1582. They caused him "in some haste, after the S. Osees affair, to strike lustily whilst the iron was hot" (Haining 66). Scot was concerned about the hold that witchcraft had on the nation, and attacked it as a "cousening art". He thus posed a threat to the established elite justice and court system, pointing out that much of the testimony on which trials depended seemed the result of deep error.

The vast majority of contemporary writers, however, whether from conviction or from political astuteness, were opposed to Scot. Of the numerous negative reactions, the strongest was that of King James himself. His 1597 Daemonologie was the most effective and direct of the counter-arguments to Scot, whose book enraged James. The Bothwell Conspiracy was one incentive for James's book, but the direct motivation was Scot's treatise. James felt so strongly that he caused the Daemonologie to be re-published in London upon his accession to the English throne in 1603. In the "Preface to the Reader" he says:

Against the damnable opinions of two principally in our age, wherof the one called SCOT an Englishman, is not ashamed in publike print to deny, that ther can be such a thing as Witch-craft: and so mainteines the old error of the Sadducees, in denying of spirits. (2)

James argues with considerable shrewdness and erudition against those who sought to minimize belief in witchcraft. To rebut questions about why "if Witches had such power of Witching of folkes to death... there had bene none left aliue long sence in the world, but they" (28), he replies that Scripture teaches that the witches' master, the devil, is "bridled". He then adroitly turns the maleficium attributed to the witches into proof of their existence:

the limites of his power were set down before the foundations of the world were laid, which he hath not power in the least jote to transgresse. But beside all this, there is ouer greate a certainty to proue that they are, by the daily experience of the harmes that they do, both to men, and whatsoeuer thing men possesses, whome God will permit them to be the instrumentes, so to trouble or visite. (30-31)

With contemporary circumstances clearly in mind, it is not surprising that Shakespeare made the witches in Macbeth conform to the ideas in the king's book. Henry N. Paul says "everything the witches do or say in the play is in strict accord with the book of the king" (264). One of Shakespeare's guiding principles was undoubtedly to gratify James and to enhance the status of the King's Men with their powerful patron.

James had sought to establish his "Divine Right" to kingship, and by implication, his infallibility, in an earlier publication, The True Law of Free Monarchies.¹⁴ In this work he seeks to establish the Divine Right of the King as God's lieutenant on earth. This principle was, as noted earlier, essential to James's ambition to succeed Elizabeth on the English throne:

Kings are called Gods by the prophetical King Dauid, because they sit vpon God his Throne in the earth, and haue the count of their administration to giue vnto him. Their office is, To minister Iustice and Iudgement to the people. (McIlwain 54-55)

He emphasizes the king's duty both to protect and to punish his lieges. Both duties would justify his support and promotion of the witch persecutions.¹⁵

By 1606 James was established on the English throne. Macbeth, with its show of eight kings as the prelude to a line that will "stretch out to th' crack of doom" (IV.1.132), would have accentuated and supported James's right to the throne by emphasizing the lineage upon which such right depends. Critics are generally agreed that as James matured into his English reign, his early paranoia about witchcraft grew less and less severe. Impetus for change seems to have come from cases involving testimony by young persons. Robbins notes the first occurred as early as 1605 in a trial involving charges by a fourteen year old girl, who later admitted her accusations were groundless. One of James's dramatic turnabouts happened in 1618, after nine witches had been executed on the testimony of John Smith, the "Leicester Boy". James intervened and examined the boy personally. As a result he halted the executions of the remaining women. In 1620 and 1621 there were similar cases:

These instances of adolescents' falsely charging people as witches were largely responsible for the change in the King's views.... "The frequency of forged possessions wrought such an alteration upon the judgment of King James that...he grew first diffident of, and then flatly to deny, the working of witches and devils as but falsehoods and delusions." (Robbins 278-79)

It is not inconceivable that Prince Henry's death in November of 1612 may have led James to see these "common" adolescents in a different way. His enlightenment is reflected in the fact that only five persons were executed for witchcraft in the last nine years of his reign. His early fears and acute xenophobia, provoked by the rebellious affairs of Bothwell and the North Berwick witches, and the Gowrie Conspiracy, seem to have diminished with maturity. Unfortunately, his change of heart did not result in any change to his statute of 1604, although it did remain almost dormant for several years. It emerged once again, however, as the basis for the 1644-47 persecutions that were inspired by Matthew Hopkins. David Matthew comments on James's change of attitude:

As the years went by the personal devil seems to have counted for less in the king's judgments. It was a conception which belonged essentially to his northern kingdom....It is difficult for us to disentangle the motives that lay behind the actions of that strange man. (80)

Other sources support the idea that James did, indeed, undergo a change of heart in the latter years of his English reign. In 1606, however, his public position had not altered. His views were still a major influence on his subjects, including Shakespeare. A close examination of the play shows the degree to which it is permeated by the witchcraft beliefs that reached their peak in Renaissance England in the Elizabethan and early Jacobean years.

CHAPTER IV

THE ROYAL PLAY OF MACBETH

The argument of this thesis is that the prevailing witchcraft beliefs of Renaissance England in 1605-06, combined with Shakespeare's perceptions of King James, constituted a major incentive for the creation of Macbeth. Most critical opinion agrees with Muir "that the poet began his play on his return to London in the autumn of 1605" (1951 xxiii), and that the play's correct date is 1606. Holinshed's account of the stories of Makbeth and of King Duff was, without question, the major source utilized by Shakespeare for Macbeth. He conflates Holinshed's accounts of the murders of King Duff and King Duncan and, by this simple device, adds significantly to the enormity of Macbeth's crime. Shakespeare's most obvious source for his presentation of witchcraft was the Daemonologie, discussed in the previous chapter. If it was not a direct source, it certainly still set the play's theoretical limits.

In Macbeth Shakespeare presents Witches, and Devils in the form of familiars. "Devil" is a tricky term because, technically, the only devil is Satan, also known as Lucifer, the fallen archangel. In this thesis, however, devil is used in its more generic sense to include Imps, Demons, Fiends, and Familiars. Witches include Crones, Hags, and Harpies: "How now, you secret, black, and midnight hags?" (IV.1.62). Witches are sometimes perceived as demons in human form, and sometimes simply as vicious old women, but it is unarguable that Shakespeare's witches are human beings possessing specific preternatural powers through a pact with the Devil, as described in chapter one. Textual evidence in Macbeth shows that Shakespeare views the Witches as women

whose powers are wielded through a familiar, and a pact with the Devil.

Witches and demons are pervasive presences and influences in Macbeth, just as they were in Shakespeare's society. According to some early theories, Shakespeare wanted the Witches to serve as symbols of evil, and thus left their nature an unresolved mystery. This view has been based almost entirely on Banquo's assertion: "You should be women, / And yet your beards forbid me to interpret / That you are so." (I.iii.45-47). Rather than imply androgyny, the beards do, in fact, support the nature of the sisters as true witches. Beards were, as described in chapter two, one of the points of identification for Renaissance witch-hunters. Shakespeare was aware of the witch/beard correlation, and had used it previously. In his late 1590's The Merry Wives of Windsor, Evans remarks "By Jeshu, I think the 'oman is a witch indeed. I like not when a 'oman has a great peard" (IV.ii.189-90).

The text definitely shows the nameless sisters, undifferentiated save by number, are women controlled by demons. The 1623 Folio stage direction "Thunder and lightning. Enter three Witches" affirms that the beings are witches. Shakespeare often uses thunder, lightning, and the fury of storms, to indicate the supernatural, a world dissolving into chaos, or both. Rosenberg notes that "These ultimate expressions of nature's energy are likely to be perceived by Shakespearean man as 'unnatural'" (1). Just enacting these stage direction would have proclaimed the supernatural and the diabolic to the Jacobean audience.

The twelve lines of Act I, Scene i, serve an important introductory function, presenting the audience with the three major elements of Renaissance witches, as discussed in chapter one. Some

lesser elements are also presented. With the question, "When shall we three meet again?" (I.i.1), the spectator is alerted to the supernatural. First, there are three witches. All odd numbers are demonic, but three is the most demonic of all.¹⁶ Rosenberg refers to three as "the magic number" (57); and three times three surpasses it in its capacity for evil (Furness 38n; 245n). The meeting that has just finished bespeaks the completion of a witches' sabbath, which is the first traditional element of witchcraft:

In Act I of Macbeth we are shown a coven of witches who have convened to learn how to work their mischief and who, after planning Macbeth's destruction, adjourn as commanded by their devils. (Paul 264)

Their "mischief" is maleficium, the second characteristic of witchcraft.

The words "In thunder, lightning, or in rain?" (I.i.2) do not constitute an adverbial phrase, but rather a second question asked by the first witch. The question is eminently sensible in view of the witches' traditional power to control the elements. The fact that the sisters are witches is again reinforced. Further, in the statement "When the hurly burly's done / When the battle's lost and won" (I.i.3-4), it is clear that the second witch knows a battle is in process, but in accordance with the limited powers of witches, she cannot foretell the essential future. She does not know what the outcome of the battle will be. The third witch evinces that they do, however, have access to accessory knowledge of the future by replying, "That will be ere the set of sun" (I.i.5). This conforms to the basic Christian belief that only God is truly prescient. In the next three lines, the sisters speak in their usual sequence: "Where the place? Upon the heath. There to meet with Macbeth." (I.i.6-8). Only the most imperceptive members of the

audience would have failed to appreciate that the sisters are intent upon the maleficium aspect of witchcraft, and that this person named Macbeth is to be its object.

The third major characteristic of witchcraft is the demonic pact. One of the major concerns of English witch trials was to identify the familiar who attended the witch as a result of this pact. A traditional and pervasive aspect of the pact is the demons' insatiable sexual appetite. The next three lines of the scene, addressed in sequence to their familiars, emphasize this aspect of Shakespeare's witches. Reacting to inaudible summonses, the first witch calls "I come, Graymalkin"; the second witch notes that "Paddock calls"; while the third witch indicates immediate compliance with "Anon" (I.i.8-10).

These lines are obedient responses by each witch to a summons from her familiar, as incubus, for the sexual activity regarded as one of the hallmarks of witches' sabbaths. Fifteenth-century publications, including Part One, Question Four of the Malleus Maleficarum, and the 1484 papal bull, "Summis desiderantes affectibus", note the frequency with which familiars, as incubus devils, summon their witches for sexual intercourse. Parts of Thomas Middleton's charm song "Black spirits and white", from his play The Witch, were, by 1623, interpolated into Macbeth. The song also says:

When hundred Leagues in Aire, we feast and sing,
Daunce, kisse, and Coll, vse euerything,
What yong-man can we wish to pleasure vs
but we enjoy him in an Incubus. (9:253-56)

The early introduction of familiars is strategic. Familiars were more prominent in English witch trials than almost anywhere else according to Robbins, who asserts: "The familiar... is an almost

exclusively English (and Scottish) contribution to the theory of witchcraft" (190). The witches' imps take forms that were strongly associated with familiars in the medieval English mind. The cat, toad (hedge-pig), and owl, are mentioned as familiars in many writings:

There is a remnant extant of an old song called the "Witches Gathering", that...tells of the preliminary signals and signs, announcing that a midnight re-union or "Hallowmass rade"...had been arranged and appointed:

"When the gray howlet has three times hoo'd,
When the grimy cat has three times mew'd,
When the tod has yowled three times I' the wode,
At the red moon cowering ahin the cl'ud;
When the stars ha'e cruppen' deep i' the drift,
Lest cantrips had pyked them out o' the lift,
Up horsies a' but mair adowe,
Ryde, ryde for Locker-briggs-knowe!" (Wood 3)

The Witches' familiars in Macbeth parallel those identified in the first three lines of the segment. These same familiars are prominent in the Songs of the Hagges in Ben Jonson's The Masque of Queens. They are also alluded to in the Masque's third charme song which begins:

The Owle is abroad, the Bat, and the Toade,
And so is the Cat-a-Mountaine;

Jonson's Masque was composed two or three years after Macbeth, and while it is possible he was echoing Shakespeare, it is far more likely he was utilizing concepts he knew would be very well known to his audience.

The second time the witches appear is in Act I, Scene iii, where their nature is once again strongly stated. The scene begins with the three witches conversing alone on the heath before the arrival of Macbeth and Banquo. When the second witch informs her sisters that she has been "Killing swine" the audience would not have failed to connect this with the charges of killing livestock (discussed in chapters one and two) that were so often levelled against supposed witches. The first

sister reports the wife's insulting "Aroynt thee witch", the only time the word witch appears in the play's dialogue. Although the more common meaning of "aroynt" is something like "begone", this present thesis argues for Furness's meaning of "anooint" (31n). The audience would have understood that the wife wished to be rid of the witch, and so suggested that she anooint herself with flying ointment to depart. The entire business of the witch's intended revenge on the "rump fed-ronyon" is replete with contemporary witch lore. She states that, "In a sieve I'll thither sail" (I.iii.8), a peculiar ability of Scottish witches that Shakespeare may well have derived from News From Scotland. She compares herself to "a rat without a tail" (I.iii.9), a notion that emphasizes the belief that, in taking on animal forms, the witch could only metamorphose member for member (Muir 1951:12n). One reason toads were so desirable as familiars was that they avoided the problem of the tail.

The first witch's description of the "rump fed ronyon's" husband as "Master of the Tiger" seems to allude to well-publicized voyages by ships of that name. The first was in 1564, while a second in 1583 actually did sail to Aleppo. The "Tiger" that inspired Shakespeare was probably, however, the one that set sail on December 5, 1604. Henry Paul (302-03) narrates the fortunes of the "Tiger" in some detail. The ship had much trouble with storms and pirates, and was buffeted by severe gales on her return voyage to England. A second ship in the fleet, named "Tiger's Whelp", disappeared in a tempest, but survived and eventually rejoined the fleet. They all returned to Milford Haven in Wales on June 27, 1606. For the contemporary audience, the misfortunes of the "Tiger" would have been vividly associated with the intended

maleficium of the North Berwick witches against King James's return trip from Denmark.

When the first witch promises "I'll drain him dry as hay" (I.iii.18), she is referring to continuous succubus activity throughout the demonic "sev'n-nights, nine times nine". She also accepts the traditional limitations on the witches' powers: "Though his bark cannot be lost, / Yet it shall be tempest-tossed" (I.iii.24-25).

With the approach of Macbeth, the witches chant a mystic charm. Demonic numbers abound as they make respectful bows to their devils: "Thrice to thine, and thrice to mine, / And thrice again, to make up nine" (I.iii.24-25). Macbeth observes to Banquo "So foul and fair a day I have not seen" (I.iii.38), in a blatant mirroring of the sisters' first scene incantation (I.i.11). By now the spectators have absolutely no doubt they are in the presence of diabolic evil.

The sisters appear to Macbeth, and to Banquo whom Holinshed describes as "the thane of Lochquhaber, of whom the house of the Stewards is descended" (Furness 383). The witches' "all hail" greetings bear ironic overtones. They reflect the "hail" with which Judas greeted Christ in the garden. "And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, master; and kissed him" (Matthew 26:49). Thus, for seventeenth-century audiences this greeting would label the sisters as foul and treacherous. The greeting is strongly associated with treason. Witches, being seen as agents of Satan, could be viewed as traitors to Christ and his people. Shakespeare uses this concept and greeting directly in Richard II. "Did they not sometime cry, 'All hail!' to Me? / So Judas did to Christ" (IV.1.169-70). He repeats it again in 3 Henry VI when

Richard, after kissing his brother the King, remarks in an aside, "To say the truth, so Judas kissed his master, / And cried, 'all hail!' whenas he meant all harm" (V.vii.33-34).

Shakespeare's ideas for the witches may have been inspired by the Norns or Sibyllae, with knowledge and control of Destiny (Rosenberg 21,29;Paul 193). In their greetings the sisters do deal separately, in the manner of Norns, with the past (Thane of Glamis), the present (Thane of Cawdor), and the future (shalt be King hereafter). Alternately, the sisters may have been drawn from the trinity of the Fates whom Tripp (246) describes as Clotho, Lachesis, and Atropos, the three daughters of Nyx, who respectively spin, measure, and cut the thread of life. Again, the sisters may well be taken from the three Ovidian daughters of Minyas (Ovid Book IV;74-5).

If he was influenced by any of these concepts, Shakespeare changed them from pagan entities to witches of Christianity, with their pervasive aura of demonic evil. The witches act in harmony with the ideas presented in the Daemonologie, and are obviously calculated to flatter the king.

The fourth major attribute of the Renaissance witch, her ability to fly, although diminished in importance by Shakespeare's time, is still alluded to each time Macbeth meets the sisters. When he observes to Banquo that the witches have vanished "Into the air, and what seem'd corporeal, / Melted as breath into the wind" (I.iii.81-2) he is only emphasizing the basic belief that witches could fly. Banquo's query, "Have we eaten on the insane root" (I.iii.84), has echoes of flying ointment formulas about it. Following the necromancy flying is again

cited very specifically when Macbeth incants, "Infected be the air whereon they ride" (IV.1.153). The above abstractions from the first and third scenes have been summarized by Briggs.¹⁷

The Weird Sisters next appearance is in Act III, Scene v. Critics are generally agreed that this scene is not original work by Shakespeare, but a later interpolation to meet the contemporary demand for spectacle and music in the theatre. (Paul 275; Rosenberg 490-496; Muir 1951:xxii-xxvii). This contention is uncertain, however, since the scene is included in the First Folio (1623) from its opening to line thirty-five. Most editions then insert part or all of the song "Come away, come away, Hecate, Hecate" (Brooke III.v.36-68), which is taken virtually unchanged from Middleton's play The Witch (III.iii.38-75). While the song is not printed in the Folio, there is a direction that says, "Sing within. Come away, come away, etc" (Appendix B). All editions of the play, including the 1623 Folio, conclude with the first witch's "Come, let's make haste, she'll soon be back again" (III.v.69).

Based on the evidence of the Folio, Act IV. Scene 1, is generally conceded to be Shakespeare's, with the exception of the song "Black spirits and white", a second interpolation from the Middleton play (IV.1.44-58). This insertion was done by 1623, however, for the Folio indicates at this point, "Musicke and a Song. Blacke Spirits, etc". The interpolations are interesting from a scholarly perspective, but they are not Shakespeare's creation. They do not, therefore, fall within the scope of this thesis, and will not be discussed further.

The arrival of Hecate in Act III, Scene v, substantially alters the play as far as its demonic and supernatural elements are concerned.

The action now moves beyond "ordinary" matters of diabolic pacts and maleficium, for the sisters now become subservient to the supreme goddess of witches. Hecate was the only Titan (Greek) goddess to retain power after the Titans were defeated by the Olympians. Mysterious, sinister, and now known as the triple goddess, she is connected with Demeter, Rhea, and Persephone.¹⁸ Powerful and beloved of Zeus, she is the patroness of such wicked sorceresses as Medea (Tripp 261). The weird sisters serve her not as subjects, but as worshippers. For centuries she has been a nocturnal goddess; the queen of evil, witchcraft, night and the underworld; and the patroness of sorcerers and witches. Macbeth, acutely aware of Hecate's demonic support of evil, invokes her before the murder of both Duncan (II.i.52-53 and of Banquo (III.ii.44).

The last appearance of the witches is in the spectacular necromancy scene, Act four, Scene one. The dark impulses of the scene are sustained by Hecate, the "other three witches", the conjuration of the masters [devils], the prophetic show of eight kings, and the apparition of Banquo. At the opening of this scene, the astute observer will note the continuing influence of demonic numbers. The attendance of the witches' familiars is stressed immediately: "Thrice the brindled cat hath mewed" (IV.i.1). Paddock, who seems slow for a devil, whines four times. His witch redeems the demonic however, by changing the count to "Thrice and once the hedge-pig whined" (IV.i.2).

Harrier the owl is now named for the first time. The third witch's familiar, he presides over each of Macbeth's murders. During the murder of Duncan, Lady Macbeth calms herself: "It was the owl that shrieked" (II.ii.3), and later calms Macbeth by saying "I heard the owl scream"

(II.ii.16). Just before Macduff enters, crying his discovery of Duncan's murder, Lennox tells Macbeth, "The obscure bird / Clamoured the livelong night" (II.iii.60-61). Harpier's attendance during the murder is again reinforced when the Old Man tells Ross that, "A falcon tow'ring in her pride of place / Was by a mousing owl hawked at, and killed" (II.iv.12-13). After the two murderers leave to slay Banquo, Macbeth observes, "Good things of day begin to droop and drowse, / Whiles night's black agents to their preys do rouse" (III.iii.55-56). Can there be any doubt that Harpier is dominant amongst "nights black agents"? In the slaughter of the Macduffs Lady Macduff expresses futile bravery by declaring that, "The poor wren, / The most diminutive of birds, will fight, / Her young ones in her nest, against the owl" (IV.ii.9-11).

The black magic around the cauldron is typical of maleficium, with each of the ingredients having a specific association with sorcery. For example, one of the most characteristic ingredients is "Slips of yew / Slivered in the moon's eclipse" (IV.i.27-28). The yew is a poisonous tree, associated with death and cut at a time of complete darkness:

So foul and murky are these witches that even the eerie light of the moon is too good for them. Black witchcraft is the magic of sterility; the moon's waxing time has always been counted the time of growth, and the moon's eclipse therefore would be the time of complete negation.

(Briggs 80)

The ingredients of the cauldron include several human body parts, in direct violation of the recently enacted law of 1604.

Macbeth's absolute descent into evil is evinced when the first witch asks him to "Say, if th'hadst rather hear it from our mouths, / Or from our masters". He immediately replies, "Call'em; let me see'em"

(IV.i.76-77). He is now "so deep in blood" that only the devils themselves can satisfy him. In order to plumb this deeply into the diabolic, only Hecate herself can serve as the necromancer. Here Shakespeare supports James's contention in the Daemonologie that "the Necromancer commands the Deuill" (24). Only Hecate can assure the conjuration of the prophetic demons. Her advent as the necromancer emphasizes the totality of Macbeth's immersion into evil. After the show of kings, it is Hecate who has the last word. Following her ironic wish "That this great King may kindly say, / Our duties did his welcome pay" (IV.i.146-47), the witches vanish forever.

In practically all early societies, whether primitive or evolved, the ascendancy of males was accepted as one of the eternal truths. Women occupied lower positions on the scale of being, and were perceived as inferior. This status pertained largely because of the males' superior physical strength, and attendant aggressiveness. Plato, for example, notes in Timaeus:

The men of the first generation who lived cowardly or immoral lives were, it is reasonable to suppose, reborn in the second generation as women; (120)

In the Republic he often reiterates this same idea:

. And can you mention any pursuit of mankind in which the male sex has not all these gifts and qualities in a higher degree than the female?...You are quite right, he replied ...[in] maintaining the general inferiority of the female sex; (176)

. Only in the distribution of labours the lighter are to be assigned to the women, who are the weaker natures. (178)

The patriarchal concept that the wife must submit to the husband was, like so many others, rooted firmly in the authority of the Bible:

Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church....Therefore, as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. (Ephesians 5:22-24)

Lady Macbeth's assertive activities would have aroused extremely negative responses in Jacobean audiences who would perceive her enmity to cultural marriage conventions as one of her great sins:

These Elizabethan and Jacobean matrimonial conventions were, of course, based on the total submission of wife to husband. (Ranald 109)

The biblical concept of husband and wife as one flesh, with the husband the better part, is severely challenged by this play. Macbeth moves from a stance of unqualified trust in his "dearest partner of greatness" (I.v.10), to a destructive isolation. His unavailing reliance on the will of his powerful wife delineates his vulnerability. He moves not only to isolation, but also to emptiness. Unable to die in union with a loved one, as do Mark Antony, King Lear, and Othello, Macbeth must die cut off from humanity, desperately and defiantly alone. He emphasises his status by declaring "But bear-like I must fight the course" (V.vii.2), seeing himself as the bear, isolated and alone against the dogs. His equation of masculinity with violence leads to his destruction when his illusion of omnipotence, nurtured by the equivocal prophecies of the necromancy, fails. It could be argued that Macbeth dies because of Lady Macbeth's defiance of the patriarchal society.

Lady Macbeth's incursion into witchcraft is undertaken in her powerful soliloquy, "The raven himself is hoarse / That croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan / Under my battlements" (I.v.37-39). The audience would have sensed the imminent evil of the diabolic pact, described in

chapter one as one of the major witchcraft beliefs, for Lady Macbeth enters into just such a pact. She invokes the spirits with three demonic exhortations, each beginning with the imperative Come. "Come you spirits / that tend on mortal thoughts" (I.v.39-40). This invocation brings her to the point where she is unarguably petitioning the devil. She bargains with "murdering ministers" (devils), to be freed from the limitations of her sex, and to be filled with direct cruelty. She entreats the spirits to grant that she may be bereft of menstruation and lactation, signifiers of femininity. Seeking to be cruel (maleficent), she asks to be cut off from remorse and to be freed from any constraints of conscience. In other words, she contracts for qualities her culture, and Shakespeare's, would have perceived as appropriate only in males. She negotiates for disturbances of nature, one of the powers devils traditionally accord to their witches.

Lady Macbeth's second exhortation is, "Come to my woman's breasts / And take my milk for gall, you murd'ring ministers" (I.v.46-47). By proclaiming herself as mother/lover of the spirits, she would be perceived by Jacobean as tacitly subverting patriarchal authority. Her third imperative emphasizes the diabolic environment evil demands: "Come, thick night, / And pall thee in the dunest smoke of Hell" (I.v.49-50). At this point she is exercising sheer witchcraft, and is utterly removed from biblical submission to her husband. By entering into a demonic pact, she has completely yielded to evil. Now, as an authentic witch, her dehumanization is complete.

Much critical attention has been paid to Lady Macbeth's shocking contention to her husband that begins "I have given suck and know / How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me" (I.vii.54-55). Dramatically, this is inconsistent with Macbeth's anguish about his "fruitless crown and barren sceptre". As far as the play informs us, Lady Macbeth has no children. Rather than focus, therefore, on the incongruous question of how many she had, I assert that Shakespeare intended this comment of hers to be understood at two levels of meaning. While the image is jarring and repulsive at the first, literal level, it is terrifying and diabolic at the second. I argue that the Jacobean audience, with its knowledge of witchcraft, would have perceived her comment at both levels. For them, as for Shakespeare, the first would have been far less momentous than the second. In chapter two the significance of the witch's mark, the teat to suckle her familiar(s), has been discussed in detail, as has its prominence in English witch trials. The mark is bestowed on the witch at the instant the diabolic pact is concluded. The play's sequence of events is important here. Lady Macbeth's pact has been concluded before she makes the statement of having given suck. She has already petitioned the devils to "Come to my womans breasts / And take my milk for gall" (I.v.46-47). According to contemporary beliefs about the demonic pact, she would already have suckled her devil. Considered at this level of meaning, asking "How many children had Lady Macbeth?" is irrelevant. I contend that the significant consideration, as it was undoubtedly perceived by contemporary Jacobean audiences, is that she is a veritable witch at this point, and the babe to whom she has given suck is her devil. The audiences would perceive not rhetoric,

but the real conjuration of infernal powers. They would realize that Lady Macbeth has concluded a diabolic alliance that will enable her to perpetrate evil with unchecked cruelty. The pact has been finalized and she is now bent upon the ultimate maleficium, the treason of regicide.

As an essential witch, Lady Macbeth exhibits undoubted maleficium which is the second aspect of Renaissance witches. She has exhorted her husband, "Hie thee hither", so as to "chastise" him to evil, and has then consummated her diabolic pact with her deliberate act of dedication to the "murd'ring ministers". She knows that evil can only take full possession of her after human nature, her femininity, has been driven out. This is the common purpose of the three invocations beginning with "Come". She knows that the inner transformation she seeks cannot take place without the assistance of devils.

Her exhortations define Lady Macbeth's true nature. She sets out on a remorselessly evil course of destruction. Her unfailing technique is to question Macbeth's manhood and bravery. "When you durst do it, then you were a man" (I.vii.49). Macbeth is driven to fulfil the idea of masculinity enunciated for him by his wife. The concept of manliness was essential to the patriarchal society of Jacobean England. The spectacle of King Duncan's murder, linking together deviant femininity, witchcraft, diabolism, and the subversion of male authority, would have disturbed that society profoundly.

Many, but not all, of Lady Macbeth's qualities can be viewed favourably today. She is powerful, ruthlessly strong, prominent, complex, single-minded, courageous, cruel, savage-minded, and dauntless. These characteristics, like those she petitions from the supernatural

spirits, were traditionally held to be suitable only in males. In the play, her courage has a practical side. It is she who orchestrates the entire murder of Duncan, as well as the alibis and cover-ups for herself and her husband: "Leave all the rest to me" (I.v.72).

When Lady Macbeth compels Macbeth to conceive power in terms of a completely masculine attribute, she assures that he will come to see her as irrelevant. Her renunciation of femininity in her demonic pact would negate the maternal and feminine qualities of affection and intimacy. Such qualities would equally have no place in Macbeth's masculinity. Once she succeeds in destroying his "milk of human kindness" she becomes superfluous, and her death is dismissed with Macbeth's "She should have died hereafter" (V.v.17).

Because her nature is of such unmitigated evil, Jacobean audiences would have been unable to feel any sympathy for Lady Macbeth. It is easy to argue that she dies, and remains, Shakespeare's most terrifying female figure, precisely because she defies and threatens patriarchal authority. On the one hand, the prophecies of the witches certainly provide one motive for Macbeth's murder of Duncan. On the other hand, the basic instability of his concept of manliness, held by his wife and society as well, might easily have stimulated the deed in any case:

The play ends by consolidating male power....The androgynous parent fails to protect Macbeth...but the masculine order is finally victorious....At the end of the play we are in a purely male realm. (Adelman 111)

Lady Macbeth would be seen by Jacobean audiences as a woman who defied male actions, attitudes, and values, and who paid the price. Her only saving graces would have been that she did not withdraw her loyalty from her husband, did not act apart from him, and did not alter the

patriarchal structure. These virtues are not, however, sufficient to redeem her. Her crime has been too great, and at the end of the play she is sacrificed. Macbeth ends supporting contemporary views. As Marilyn French has remarked, "Although some balance is restored to the kingdom, there is no change in its value structure" (251).

Shakespeare's portrait of the Devil Porter at Hell Gate falls within the context of this present thesis because of its supernatural connotations, and also because of its strong connection to the Gunpowder Plot against the life of James I and VI. The intent of the plotters was to blow up King James in Parliament on November 5, 1605. Macbeth was almost certainly in process of composition at this time. References to the Plot occur in the Porter scene, and are significant in dating the play as 1606.

The Porter's first lines, in monologue (II.iii.1-19), reflect the Miracle Plays of the fourteenth century, such as the Descent Into Hell in Chester, and the Harrowing of Hell in York. These plays deal with Christ's activities after his death, and feature two or three devils at the gate of hell. The Last Judgement plays, such as the one at Chester, show devils welcoming in many contemporary social oppressors, precisely as does the Porter in Macbeth. In the plays, several major devils such as Beelzebub, Satan, Belial, and Titivillus are named, but minor devils are not. This might account for the Porter's statement in line seven, "Who's there in th' other devil's name?". A more likely cause of his poor memory could easily derive from the popular aversion to naming the devil for fear it might serve as a conjuration. In truth, the Porter

appears to see himself as one of the diabolic trinity of Lucifer, Beelzebub, and Mephistopheles, and further, to combine the role of the Devils at the Gate of Hell with that of St. Peter at the gate of Heaven.

The devils at Hell's gate are also significant in fourteenth-century literary works other than the Miracle Plays. The most notable of these is William Langland's Piers Plowman, considered by many to be the greatest alliterative poem of Medieval England. Langland's portrayal of Christ's arrival at Hell Gate emphasizes the presence of devils:

Eft the light bad unlouke, and Lucifer answerde,
 'Quis est iste?
 What lord artow?' quod Lucifer. The light soone seide,
 'Rex glorie,
 The lord of myght and of mayn and alle manere vertues -
 Dominus Virtutum.
 Dukes of this dymme place, anon undo thise yates,
 That Crist may come in, the Kynges sone of Hevene!'
 And with that breeth helle brak, with Belialles barres
 For any we or warde, wide open the yates.
 Patriarkes and prophetes, populus in tenebris,
 Songen Seint Johanes song, 'Ecce Agnus Dei!'
 Behold the Lamb of God (Jn 1:36)
 (Passus XVIII:315-326)

The Porter's first specific reference to the Gunpowder Plot is his welcome to "a farmer that hanged himself on th' expectation of plenty." (II.iii.4-5). Farmer was an alias used by Father Henry Garnet, who had been sought by authorities for twenty years. He was captured in the intense search for plotters, and became one of the defendants in the ensuing treason trials:

Garnet, Henry, S.J., Superior of the Jesuits in England
 (alias Walley, Darcy, Rivers, Robert, Farmer, Henry
 Philips). (Williamson 296)

The Porter's second reference to the Plot is contained in his attention to equivocation, that was notorious as the defense used by Garnet:

Equivocation is the ambiguous use of words so as to conceal the truth without a direct lie. To equivocate is also to prevaricate, quibble or falter in what has been called a Jesuitical manner. (Parkinson 101)

Equivocation is also one of the hallmarks of Macbeth's weird sisters, and through them is tied to devils. When Birnam wood moves against him he says he must now "Begin / To doubt th' equivocation of the fiend" (V.vi.42-43). He decries this same trait a little later when Macduff reveals the manner of his birth. "And be these juggling fiends no more believed / That palter with us in a double sense" (V.vii.49-50). At this point in the drama Macbeth experiences his moment of revelation. Jacobean attending performances of Macbeth would have immediately connected these lines to Garnet and the Plot:

What to a modern audience may seem a little tedious was screamingly funny when written. All London knew about equivocation before Garnet's trial was over, but Salisbury had made Garnet known as an equivocator before the trial had well begun. (Parkinson 102)

Father Garnet was proven to have committed extensive perjury during his trial. He had then argued his right to equivocate in order to defend himself. A Jesuit "Treatise of Equivocation" figured in the proceedings of the trial. (It is now believed that Garnet was the author.) Tried in March, 1606, he was found guilty, and hanged on May 3, 1606. Many Jacobean, including King James, would have derived great satisfaction from the Porter's admission of the equivocator to Hell:

Faith, here's an equivocator, that could swear in both the scales against either scale, who committed treason enough for God's sake, yet could not equivocate to Heaven: O come in, equivocator. (II.iii.8-11)

The Porter's third reference to the Plot occurs with, "Therefore much drink may be said to be an equivocator with lechery" (II.iii.29-

30). This line also alludes to Garnet. He was said to be a heavy drinker, and to have consoled himself in prison by drinking wine. The assertion appears to be true:

Garnet observed (perhaps with surprise) that 'I am allowed with every meal a good draught of excellent claret wine.'... wine was his weakness. (Parkinson 102)

Appendix C depicts an extant seventeenth-century broadsheet, entitled "The Papists Powder = Treason", which shows Great Britain's deliverance from papist machinations. Among other things, it depicts the Pope conspiring with seven others to ruin Britain on November 5. One of the group is a bearded and horned Satan. In another part of the picture an archetypal devil, complete with horns, cloven hoofs and a tail, leads Guy Fawkes towards Parliament. But the eye of God is watching him. This depiction supports the idea that Jacobean society perceived diabolic influence as an active element in the life of the country. The malevolent forces of the broadsheet, like the witches in Macbeth, are committed to creating anarchy and chaos by assassinating the reigning monarch. Macbeth is a play about treason stimulated by Satan through witchcraft. The atmosphere of treason and suspicion that permeates the play must have reflected the atmosphere that existed in England once the Gunpowder Plot was discovered.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The final great sceptic who, in 1718, gave the decisive "coup de grace" to the witchcraft doctrine held by the Renaissance elite was Francis Hutchinson.¹⁹ In an eloquent appraisal of Hutchinson's impact, Wallace Notestein comments "There was nothing more to say".²⁰ But was there really nothing more to say? Criticism that examines the works of Shakespeare from the seventeenth century to the present time is so voluminous as to be overwhelming. A great amount has been written on Macbeth alone, and within it have been varying degrees of comment about the witches. A comprehensive survey of these critical studies would be a challenging undertaking, and well beyond the scope of this conclusion. A selection of well-known and respected critics has been made, however, and their major works have been examined to determine their remarks about, and attitudes toward, the witches in Macbeth. The critics include writers who lived and wrote in each century following the seventeenth. From all of these critics, from a variety of different perspectives, comes much eloquent commentary and insight about Macbeth. My sole concern is, however, with what they say (and what they do not say), about witches, witchcraft, and the supernatural. I have concluded that, with some exceptions, their observations lack the depth and breadth of view that the topic warrants. There is little evidence of any clear recognition about the insidious extensiveness of the whole belief. While much of what they say is accurate and defensible, there is also a pattern of recurring errors and misconceptions.

The most notable eighteenth-century critic was Samuel Johnson (1709-84). He reinforces the idea that the concepts and events presented in Macbeth do reflect contemporary witchcraft beliefs:

(Surveying) the notions that prevailed at the time when the play was written...he [Shakespeare] turned the system that was then universally admitted to his advantage, and was far from overburthening the credulity of his audience. (255)

In discussing the cauldron scene Johnson notes "how exactly he has conformed to common opinions and traditions" (270). He also notes the contrast between the two cultures, and James's influence on the play:

The reality of witchcraft has in all ages and countries been credited by the common people, and in most by the learned themselves...tho the day was gradually encreasing upon us, the goblins of witchcraft still continued to hover in the twilight....In the reign of King James, in which the tragedy was written, many circumstances concurred to propagate and confirm this opinion...(the king) was much celebrated for his knowledge....The doctrine of witchcraft at once was established by law and by fashion, and it became not only unpolite, but criminal, to doubt it. (255-57)

Johnson then briefly describes the Daemonologie. His comments reinforce many of the other points made in the present thesis, although he does not pursue any of them in significant detail. He observes that "the ready way to gain King James's favour was to flatter his speculation...to the doctrine of witchcraft...which was very powerfully inculcated" (257). He notes that the Folio uses the word "aroynt", and then goes on to explain it in terms of the "flying ointment" belief. He discusses Lady Macbeth briefly, but with no hint of "witch". Of Hecate, he says the witches are "sacrificing" to her, which is not precisely true. He comments on familiars, and on "the power of witches being not universal, but limited" (270). He talks about the body parts in the witches' cauldron, but does not relate them to the law of 1604. His

views generally concur with those advanced in the present thesis, but lack detail. He ignores many of the witchcraft aspects of the play.

The next three critics were contemporaries in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century England. Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834) commented on Macbeth in several of his writings. His analysis of the play is interesting, but is almost devoid of reference to the question of witchcraft. His attention is mainly focused on the first act, through which he develops the characters of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth on a purely natural plane. He does comment briefly on the extent of the witches' responsibility for Macbeth's guilt and Lady Macbeth's character. One of his few direct references to the witches notes "the first appearance of the Weird Sisters as the keynote of the character of the whole play" (1960 vol 1:60). He mentions Lady Macbeth's "raven" speech and cites one and a half lines, "Come, you spirits / That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here etc.", but dismisses the entire invocation as merely "her shadows of imagination" (65), and makes no association with witchcraft.

Coleridge ignores incidents that in my view are very significant, and he also makes several erroneous observations. For example, in his analysis he jumps to the murder of Lady Macduff, completely ignoring the necromancy scene. He notes "the vulgar stage error which transformed the Weird Sisters into witches with broomsticks....fatherless, motherless, sexless" (1960 vol 2:220). There is utterly no textual basis for the comment about "broomsticks", nor for the "motherless, fatherless" observation. The "sexless" designation ignores not only the first witch's frenetic pursuit of the rump-fed ronyon's husband, but also the pervasive presence of the three familiars.

Finally, far from emphasizing the many Jacobean influences on the play, Coleridge turns them completely around. In a lecture delivered on February 6, 1818, he asserted, "Least of all poets, antient [sic] or modern, does Shakespeare appear to be coloured or affected by the age in which he lived" (1960 vol 2:250). He had earlier voiced this belief in a "miscellaneous fragment" (c1811), describing Shakespeare as the "least of all poets colored in any particulars by the spirit or customs of his age...in an age of witchcraft and astrology, no witches (for we must not be deluded by stage directions), but the female character" (1960 vol 1:216). He dismisses the Porter scene as "the disgusting passage of the Porter...an interpolation of the actors" (1907:156), and he so misses the nature of the witches that he suggests they should be played "in the flexile character-masks of the ancient pantomime" (1907:158).

Coleridge's contemporary, William Hazlitt (1778-1830), comments on Macbeth in his Characters of Shakespeare's Plays. He praises the first scene, saying "Shakespeare excelles [sic] in the openings of his plays: that of Macbeth is the most striking of any" (12). He gives no analysis, however, to support the statement, nor does he show how "the overwhelming pressure of preternatural agency urges on the tide of human passion" (12). Hazlitt notes Lady Macbeth's "obdurate strength of will...the magnitude of her resolution" (13), and immediately comments on her "raven" speech, noting "The deliberate sacrifice of all other considerations to gaining...by the murder of Duncan, is gorgeously expressed...hearing of 'his fatal entrance under her battlements'" (14). He quotes almost the entire speech (I.v.39-53), but never returns to it. His only direct remark about the sisters records:

the cold, abstracted, gratuitous, servile malignity of the Witches, who are equally instrumental (with Lady Macbeth) in urging Macbeth to his fate for the mere love of mischief, and from a disinterested delight in deformity and cruelty. (15)

Here he completely ignores the strong, virtually universal belief in the maleficium of witches toward the king as God's representative on earth. He also ignores the fact that witches/devils, "the multiplying villanies of nature" (I.ii.11) supported "the merciless Macdonwald", and are now seeking revenge for his slaying by Macbeth (Paul 292, 294). Hazlitt states that "Duncan is cut off...by treason linked with witchcraft" (18), but does not expand on either concept, or make the biblical connection. He notes "they should be women but their beards forbid it" (19), but does not discuss why. What he says about witchcraft and the supernatural in the play is minimal and superficial, as witness his lecture on "Shakespeare and Milton":

the world of spirits lay open to him like the world of real men and women; and there is the same truth in his delineation of the one as the other; for if the preternatural characters he describes could be supposed to exist, they would speak, and feel, and act, as he makes them. (Howe vol 5:47-48)

The third critic of this era was Thomas De Quincey (1785-1859). In his 1823 essay "On the Knocking at the Gate in Macbeth" (1909), he remarks that, after speculating about the episode for many years, he came to see it as analogous to the "retirement of the human heart, and the entrance of the fiendish heart" (149). While he believes that with this scene "both [Macbeths] are conformed to the image of devils; and the world of devils is suddenly revealed" (149), his main concern is with the scene's dramatic effect. "It makes known audibly that the reaction [to Duncan's murder] has commenced" (149). De Quincey ignores

the Porter's supernatural genesis, and the Gunpowder Plot references. He notes "the present condition of the supernatural and its power over man" (vol 3;287-88), and from this perspective he declares that:

the witches in Macbeth are another variety of supernatural life....The circumstances of the blasted heath...the withered attire of the mysterious hags and the choral litanies of their fiendish Sabbath are as finely imagined... as those which heralded ...the ghost in Hamlet.
(1863 vol 15:81).

While this says something about the mood-setting traits of the witches, it says absolutely nothing about their essential nature. He does refer to King James's book as source, and then observes, "At a time when the trials of witches, the royal book on demonology, and popular superstition...had degraded and polluted the ideas of these mysterious beings...Shakespeare does not fear to employ them in high tragedy" (1863 vol 15:81). Beyond these remarks, he does not examine the enigma of the witches.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, A.C. Bradley (1850-1935) was the giant of Shakespearean criticism. His Shakespearean Tragedy is still considered one of the most important works in the literature. Bradley devotes notable attention to the witches in Macbeth. Referring to audiences of his own day, he speaks of the "fascination of the supernatural" (277), and says the witches help to set the atmosphere of the play. Yet he fails to elaborate on this point. Much of his comment about the witches is subsumed into his discussion of the theme of darkness.

He remarks that "Whenever the Witches are present we see and hear a thunder storm; when they are absent we hear of ship-wrecking storms and direful thunder" (281). He later notes that the Witches and Banquo's

Ghost conspire with several other effects "to awaken horror, and in some degree almost a supernatural dread....to excite supernatural alarm and, even more, a dread of the presence of evil" (282-83). Bradley is accurate as far as he goes, but he does not expand his ideas. He makes his most accurate comments about the witches when, in discussing Shakespeare's technique, he says:

He took the ideas about witch-craft that he found existing in people around him....The Witches...are not goddesses, or fates, or... supernatural beings. They are old women, poor and ragged, skinny and hideous, full of vulgar spite....There is not a syllable in Macbeth to imply that they are anything but women...(who) have received from evil spirits certain supernatural powers. (285)

Bradley is inaccurate, however, when he speaks of the vision that Macbeth "forces" from the witches in the necromancy scene. He misses the point that this scene, with its equivocal prophecies, shows an activity of devils. Once Hecate and the devils take over, the witches become merely spectators.

Bradley is usually accurate, but in a number of key areas he stops far short of full understanding. His limited discussion about Lady Macbeth does not relate her to "witchness", and completely ignores her demonic pact. He marks the Porter at hell-gate, but takes it no further. Although he identifies the Gunpowder Plot references, he says "the Porter does not even make me smile...he is grotesque" (333). He does not mention the influence of King James's views, or contemporary social beliefs and practices, on the play. His whole attention is devoted to the play itself, so he views the witches only in terms of plot, and their effect on the audience.

The early to middle twentieth century is represented in this conclusion by five eminent critics from that rich era of Shakespearean criticism. Lily B. Campbell, the first of these early to mid-twentieth century critics, treats Macbeth as a "study in fear" (208). She also says both he and Lady Macbeth have "the ambition which moves to rash deeds" (213). In her discussion of the play, she ignores both the opening scene, and the first part of act one, scene three. She begins by noting that "Macbeth meets with the three witches on the blasted heath in the thunder that appropriately heralds the appearance of the supernatural" (213). She does not, however, discuss this in further detail. She contends that this scene emphasizes the fear that appears in Macbeth, but dismisses the witches by simply saying "they vanish".

Campbell quotes Banquo's speech that mentions "the instruments of darkness" (I.iii.125), and also Macbeth's "this supernatural soliciting" (I.iii.131), but does not expand on either phrase, and also totally ignores Lady Macbeth's demonic pact scene. She says that Macbeth sees the witches as "evil", and that Hecate has "evil intentions", but that is as far as she goes. Even in the necromancy scene, her focus is almost completely on Macbeth's fear. She does refer to the prophecies of the apparitions, but only as part of plot summary, the dominant feature of her comments. She notes in passing that Lennox did not see the witches, but takes this observation no further. She erroneously refers to "the words of the witches" (234), "the witches and their promises" (236), and "the assurance of the witches" (237), when in each case she is referring to the prophecies of the conjured devils. She never discusses the nature of the witches, except incidentally in relation to something else.

Harley Granville-Barker is the second representative of this era. He begins his comments by stating that "the chief difficulty is with the play's opening" (61), then goes on to advocate its elimination: "The scene...is a poor scene and a pointless scene....It may well be omitted" (61-2). In chapter four I have discussed how the first scene provides important information, and why it is essential in setting the play's whole mood and tenor. This critic's error continues when he discusses the third scene in act one:

The present opening seems spurious and it is quite out of key with the more authentic part of the scene. There is much to be said for boldly omitting it, and beginning... with the entrance of Macbeth and Banquo. (63)

This comment is off the mark. Granville-Barker appears to miss, or to see no relevance in, the supernatural presentations in the play. His preferred way of handling episodes he finds difficult is to cut them out. He later declares that the reference to touching for the King's Evil was put in to please James. This ignores the prevalent conclusion that James did not support the practice. Being finally prevailed upon by his English councillors to continue it, the King did so but only in a greatly modified form. This point is argued in detail by Henry Paul (367-87) and to a lesser extent by Marvin Rosenberg (551-52). Brooke notes "It would not have been safe flattery. James did indeed touch occasionally, but with great reluctance" (72).

In discussing act four, scene one, the same critic comments on "the wild vigour with which the weird sisters are conjured" (78), and is again in error. It is devils that are conjured, not the witches. He is equally in error with his remark that "their incantations round the cauldron...are given strength and good colour but no more" (87). In

short, Granville-Barker entirely misses the significance of the witches and the complexity of their presentation by Shakespeare. In speaking of them he quotes the first lines of Banquo's "What are these..." (I.iii.39-42), and Macbeth's "How now you secret, black, and midnight hags?" (IV.i.62), and claims these two remarks "surely paint them for us with sufficient clarity" (87). He makes no mention of Lady Macbeth as witch, and his statements about the witches seem naive and uninformed.

Two texts of Eustace Mandeville Tillyard (1889-1962) have been examined. In the preface to his acclaimed work, The Elizabethan World Picture, he notes that he has focussed on order versus disorder, since "Cosmic order was one of the genuine ruling ideas of the age" (vi). Witchcraft, one of the most vivid agencies of disorder in the age, would presumably form an essential part of such a discussion, but it is completely ignored. He mentions Macbeth as a play of disorder and characterizes the scene between Malcolm and Macduff as a discussion of order. Beyond that, he does not mention the play. He says he wants to consider the "many variations of opinion about the way the universe was constituted" (viii), but he does not consider witchcraft as a variation. Later in his text Tillyard notes that the Elizabethans were "terrified lest it [order] should be upset" (16). He also comments on their concern with the wickedness of sin. These comments cry out to be related to the witchcraft tenets of the age, but Tillyard ignores the connection.

His specific examination of Macbeth is contained in Shakespeare's History Plays. He explains that he has included the play here because he regards it as an epilogue to the Wars of the Roses plays. He then links it with Richard III in a discussion of order and disorder. He

cites the murder of Macduff's family as a "supreme act of disorder" (321). This is the gist of his entire chapter. He makes no reference to witches, witchcraft, or the supernatural, and obviously has no interest in either Renaissance witchcraft beliefs or the influence of cultural conceptions on the play.

J. Dover Wilson (1881-1969) discusses Macbeth and the supernatural in detail. In The Essential Shakespeare, he sees the play as "almost a morality play" (145) and says of Shakespeare's age:

The world...was the abode of myriads of evil spirits,
classified by learned demonologists....Dealers in black
magic...with their familiars and attendant demons...[who]
if convicted were burned without mercy. (17)

He is accurate about supernatural belief and the classification of demons by the intellectual elite but, in spite of his comment quoted here, witches in England were not burned (see chapter two). Wilson notes "the trial of the Jesuit, Henry Garnet, in the Porter's speech in Macbeth" (12), as an example of Shakespeare working contemporary events into his plays, but he does not comment further.

Wilson subsequently notes that "it is significant that...witches do not become prominent until his [Shakespeare's] Jacobean days, or at any rate until after 1600" (18). He says this in an attempt to tie Shakespeare's interest in witches to King James. But this attempt is inaccurate, because Shakespeare deals with witchcraft and necromancy in both 1 Henry VI and 3 Henry VI. Both of these plays date from c1591. Further, in his very first play, The Comedy of Errors, dated as early as 1588, there are episodes that speak of Satan, the devil, the devil's dam, the fiend, a sorceress, conjuration, and a witch (IV.ii & iii). (Endnote # 12)

In his Life in Shakespeare's England Wilson says that his "passage on 'witches in Scotland' throws an interesting...new light upon the weird sisters in Macbeth" (ix). He is referring to his chapter three, "Superstition". In it he quotes heavily from Scot's Discoverie of Witchcraft. He cites the witches' opening lines from act one, scene three, and then, for four pages (33-36) reproduces much of the account of the North Berwick witches in News From Scotland. The quotation is then left hanging, with no comment or discussion. He devotes three full pages to Scot's description of flying and flying ointment, but then erroneously relates it to the brew in the witches' cauldron. He offers no further comment, interpretation, or analysis of the cauldron scene. In this work Wilson gives lengthy direct quotations from Scot, and from News From Scotland, and leaves it at that.

In Six Tragedies of Shakespeare he examines Macbeth specifically, noting it "is not only a murder story, it contains witches...to lure the murderer on" (24). He describes the opening as "thrilling", with no comment, and then says:

King James...had a firm belief in witches and demonology; and Macbeth...about his ancestor Banquo, was certainly written for his pleasure....But the accession of James, who had a passion for burning old women alive, made witches the great question of that age. (24-25)

While Wilson is accurate about James's belief in witches and, almost assuredly, about his pleasure in the play, he repeats his previous error about burning witches in England. He offers no credible evidence about the king's allegedly sadistic "passion". Neither did research for this present thesis discover anything that would even remotely support the assertion.

Wilson discusses Lady Macbeth briefly, relating her to "Milton's proud Prince of Darkness" (30). In her "Invocation to the powers of darkness" (28), he sees her "Come" invocations only as a prayer to "suppress her conscience" (28). He quotes and discusses the last five lines of her "raven" speech (I.v.49-53), but only for their mood-setting function. He refers to "the witches...crowding about their cauldron, with its hideous ingredients, and seemingly brewing therein all imaginable evil and bestiality, to be loosed upon the world" (28). This eloquent comment might be relevant if he were discussing the atmosphere of act four, scene one, but he makes it discussing act one, scene three. There is no basis for the comment in this context. In looking back on the necromancy scene Wilson sees it as the point "when the witches have assured him of safety" (32). This repeats a serious misconception of other critics. It is not the witches, but rather their masters (devils) whose "equivocation" Macbeth interprets as assurances of safety.

The last critic from this era is G.R. Wilson Knight, (1897) who deals with the supernatural and witches in greater detail than do any of the other critics examined. He notes correctly the "anomalous unnatural creatures, the Weird Sisters, who have broken away from Hecate's rule" (1984:29). His stated concern in chapter three of his 1984 text is with Shakespeare's references to the supernatural, including witchcraft and devils. He states that the witches are "obviously conceived as witches according to traditional beliefs" (1984:48). He comments accurately about many aspects of the witches, and makes a relatively good analysis of both act one, scene one, and act four, scene one (1984:48-50). His observations lack, however, the depth and breadth the scenes demand.

Like Wilson, Knight also makes several errors. He notes that "we have, at the end [of the necromancy scene] an implicit suggestion that the whole has been a subjective, dream-like experience, since the Witches or Weird Sisters have vanished without being seen by Lennox" (1984:136). Here he misses the fact of the witches' "flying". There is no solid evidence that Shakespeare presents the necromancy as anything other than an objectively real event.

In The Imperial Theme the same critic notes "The evil in Macbeth ...acts through his wife" (28). In his discussion of act four, scene one he speaks of "the Weird Women with their cauldron and its holocaust of hideous ingredients" (1963:138), paraphrasing his earlier "holocaust of filth prepared by the Weird Sisters" (1949:145). In both cases he names many of the cauldron's contents, but does not comment further, nor does he relate the scene to contemporary cultural beliefs. He falls into a common error of many of these critics when he says the witches pronounce "their two main prophecies in the Cauldron Scene" (1963:152), missing the point that it is conjured devils who make the prophecies. He notes Lady Macbeth's "I have given suck", only in discussing milk as one of the play's themes. (1963:143). In examining the "raven" speech he makes no reference to witchcraft, devils, or Lady Macbeth as witch (1963:146).

In The Wheel of Fire Knight, while making many valid observations about the play, misses a number of key factors, or else makes erroneous comments. For example, he quotes the old man's lines about the falcon killed by an owl, but does not make the owl/familiar connection, nor does he comment in any detail about the familiars. He dwells on "the evil...and the enveloping atmosphere of the play" ((1949:141), but then

passes off the first scene as merely "introductory". He also ignores act one, scene three, prior to the arrival of Macbeth and Banquo. He mentions "The drunken Porter doing duty at the gate of Hell" (1949:150), but offers no further comment. In this text, nevertheless, he expands accurately on the nature of the witches:

The Weird Sisters are objectively conceived: they are not, as are the dagger and ghost, the subjective effect of evil in the protagonist's mind. They are, within the Macbeth universe, independent entities. (1949:157)

Knight later notes that "The absolute reality of the evil is contingent on the objectivity of the Weird Sisters. Now they are clearly conceived as objective" (1949:268). He returns to error, however, when in discussing the cauldron scene he says that, "The Weird Sisters prophesy truth" (1949:258).

Perhaps the most unexpected finding of this examination is the paucity of comment about witchcraft, witches, the supernatural, and the contemporary conditions of the play's production, by those critics of the current era who were examined. In this modern age of the latter twentieth-century, critics have been largely associated with specific schools of criticism. The four who are examined here represent Feminist, New Historicist, and Marxist views. An examination of the major works of each critic reveals that they refer to Macbeth and to Renaissance witchcraft only slightly if at all. When they make references they never elaborate on the Renaissance cultural relationships. Their comments are invariably secondary to some other argument. Supernatural beliefs and practices, as a constituent part of the society that nurtured them, appear to be of little or no interest or consequence to these critics.

Perhaps they have succumbed to what Donald LePan describes as "the fact that the witches' scenes in twentieth-century productions not infrequently lapse into unintentional humour....[a] sort of bemused response to the witches" (293). The critics should, if this is so, heed LePan's further remarks that when the play was written the belief was taken "very seriously".

Catherine Belsey, a Feminist critic, focusses on concepts of "ideology" and "discourse". In Critical Practice she makes three scattered references to the play. "Macbeth need not be understood as 'characteristically' depraved" (74). "Macbeth...became a regicide in defiance of his own discourse" [as loyal subject to the king] (89). "Macbeth is a political play...the metaphor points outward to the parallel between crisis in the social formation and the subject in crisis" (90). She employs no other Macbeth references.

In her other major work (1985), however, Belsey makes several remarks that deserve consideration. In speaking of women's search for equal rights, she says "In the course of these struggles women found a number of forms of resistance.... [including] witchcraft and inspired prophesying" (150). She expands on this idea later when she states, in a series of remarks on page 185, that "Lady Macbeth is explicitly aligned with the witches. She continues the work they began". The witches are, she suggests, "at the borders of what is female". She adds, "Lady Macbeth invokes spirits to unsex her" and "Equally dangerous sisters were eliminated by the English witchcraze, the demonization of women". Her stated focus is "Identity and Difference in Renaissance Drama".

Belsey makes several other observations that could easily be related to the play, but she does not do so. In examining women who did not conform to patriarchal ideals of femininity, she emphasizes "They might have beards" (186), and other unfeminine qualities, but she never relates them to Macbeth's witches. The belief that witches were voluble, with sharp and angry tongues, she interprets as a device to keep women in their place. She devotes much attention to various witch trials in order to support her arguments but, in her text that "takes the dramas of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as the starting-point of the differential identities of man and woman" (back cover), she ignores the witches and the demonic representations in Macbeth.

Stephen Greenblatt, whose affiliation is to New Historicism, discusses Macbeth, witchcraft, the supernatural, superstition, and devils, in his Shakespeare Negotiations (1990). He pays significant attention to demonic possession and exorcism, discussing them in some detail. In Greenblatt's arguments about social control, Samuel Harsnett's 1603 Declaration of Egregious Popish Imposters figures prominently, as does Scot's Discoverie. This critic makes many other allusions to witchcraft, witches, and the supernatural, but his only mention of Macbeth is to note that King Lear's madness is "hysterica passio", and that in his story there are "no witches, as in Macbeth" (119). The sub-title of his text is "The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England", but Greenblatt seems not to regard Macbeth as part of that circulation.

Jonathan Dollimore, whose orientation is to both New Historicist and Marxist criticism, pays equally scant attention to Macbeth and his

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witches. He discusses Banquo's two murderers as examples of how "theatre gains its realism...by exaggeration of essential characteristics" (243), but makes no other reference to the play. In his work, subtitled "Shakespeare and His Contemporaries", he breathes not a word about witches, witchcraft, devils, the demonic, or any other supernatural beliefs of the age he purports to examine.

Jan Kott, in "'Macbeth', or Death Infected", offers his appraisal of the play, but his comments on witchcraft, the supernatural, and witches, are insignificant. He treats the play primarily as the story of a historical murder, and devotes a major portion of his essay to comparing and contrasting it with Richard III, just as Tillyard did. Like so many of the previous critics he discounts the opening scene, commenting that "after a prologue with the three witches, the action proper begins with Duncan's words" (69). He later makes the cryptic observation that "Witches in Macbeth are part of the landscape and are formed of the same matter as the world" (71). He mentions that "a falcon has been pecked to death in flight by an owl" (71), but makes no connection to either Harpier or the other familiars. It is merely passed off as an "unnatural" event. In discussing Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, Kott refers to their marriage as "This particular union in which there are no children, or they have died" (71). Based on the authority of the text, the inference that children may have died is groundless. He makes no other pertinent references.

From this investigation of representative critics, it seems evident that intensive analysis of Renaissance witchcraft beliefs and

their impact on Macbeth is, and has been, lacking. I have tried to present solid evidence that consideration of these beliefs is integral to any complete analysis of the play. Further inquiry should enhance knowledge concerning the Jacobean's widespread fear of witchcraft, with its concomitants of regicide, rebellion, and treason. Treason being most heinous of all crimes for English Renaissance society, its presentation on the stage was highly emotive. Fears relative to treason were felt by the elite culture generally, and by royalty and the body politic particularly. The stability of belief in the existence of witchcraft cannot be ignored or denied. It is an essential consideration for critics who seek to probe the social and cultural conditions of the play's production.

The present thesis makes the case that witches were real to most of Shakespeare's fellow citizens, and that the question of witchcraft was vital to his design of Macbeth. It is valid to infer that he presents genuine contemporary beliefs and fears (which he may, perhaps, have intensified). The surprising point is that most critics, particularly in the latter twentieth century, underestimate the entire question. Many ignore, distort, discount, and pooh-pooh the subject, or at the very least question its importance. The truth is that Shakespeare makes acutely real on the stage something that was prevalent in the contemporary public mind.

Hence I suggest that Shakespeare himself took witchcraft very seriously. Renaissance witchcraft beliefs were not peripheral but were, rather, integral to his creation of Macbeth. Whether or not he believed in the supernatural himself is a large question that requires further

research. We should also examine why critics have failed to focus on the main social realities, the tangible dangers from witches as perceived in 1606. Such inquiry must be concerned with why Renaissance witchcraft beliefs, persecutions, and executions, have been so insignificantly attended to for so long a time.

Many reasons may be hypothesized why major literary critics have tended to ignore or downplay the question of witchcraft. Do they honestly believe it is unimportant, or are there more complex reasons for this tendency? Is it because of possible embarrassment over the parts played in persecutions and executions by the cultural elites, especially by church, state, and crown? Is it concern over facing the problem of whether Shakespeare himself believed in the doctrines of witchcraft? This possibility is hinted at by at least two critics:

Shakespeare...used a great body of witchlore. He used it, too, with apparent good faith, though to conclude therefrom that he believed in it himself would be a most dangerous step. (Notestein 243-44)

Practically everyone in Shakespeare's time believed in witchcraft, and we have no reason for thinking that the creator of Macbeth was immune from the universal delusions. (J. Dover Wilson 1932:17)

Future investigations should also examine and confirm the nature and causes of changes in James's attitudes. Finally, differences between beliefs and practices of the elite and common cultures need significant attention. Some may argue that such studies are in the domain of history or sociology rather than of English literary criticism. In truth, all of these disciplines are essential for comprehensive inquiry, and all potentially have a great deal to offer. The need is for cooperative investigation.

I maintain that any venture claiming to examine Renaissance texts at the time of their production is doomed to be incomplete if it ignores or underestimates the supernatural, and the witchcraft beliefs of the age. This thesis on witchcraft in Macbeth may, I venture to believe, constitute a small contribution to a very large field of inquiry. I consider that its unique contribution lies in its analysis of Lady Macbeth's demonic pact, and in its concomitant proposal that her analogy of having given suck should be perceived at two different levels of meaning. There is, unquestionably, much more that remains to be explored, disclosed, resolved and clarified. There are many lessons still to be learned.

ENDNOTES

1.

<u>Witchcraft</u>	<u>Ancient Religion</u>	<u>Christianity</u>
Candlemas	Fire Festival	Purification of BVM
May Eve	Fertility Festival	Feast of St. Catharine
St. John's Eve	Midsummer Festival	Eve of John the Baptist
Lammastide [Loaf Mass]	Harvest Festival	St. Peter's Chains
Halloween	Festival of the Dead	All Saints Eve
St. Thomas's Day	Midwinter Feast	St. Thomas, Apostle

(Abstracted from Robbins 416; Valiente 293: Everyday Missal. Boston: Benziger Brothers Inc. 1949)

2.

This land was all filled with fairies,
 The elf-queen with her jolly company...
 But now no man can see elves any more,
 For now the great charity and prayers
 Of limiters and other holy friars...
 This makes it that there are no fairies.
 For where an elf was wont to walk
 There walks now the limiter himself...
 Women may go safely up and down.
 In every bush or under every tree
 There is no other incubus but he.

The Canterbury Tales "Wife of Bath's Tale" 859-880)

3.

Reginald Scot discusses a specific sixteenth-century recipe which was translated from an original Latin version cited by Giovanni Battista Porta in his 1560 text, De Miraculis Rerum Naturalium. The recipe includes the process of its preparation:

The receipt is as followeth.

Rx. The fat of young children, and seeth it with water in a brassen vessell, reserving the thickest of that which remaineth boiled in the bottome, which they laie up and keepe, until occasion serveth to use it. They put hereunto Eleoselinum, Aconitum, Frondes populeas and Soote.
 (Book X Chapt viii)

Aconitum is aconite, also called wolf's bane. Frondes populeas are popular leaves. (These leaves had long been used by old-time apothecaries to make an ointment called 'unguentum populeum' which would sooth inflammations and wounds.) The translation of Eleoselinum is more difficult. It appears to mean hemlock, but may also refer to mountain parsley. (Valiente 144-45)

4. Flying ointment is a focus in Middleton's play The Witch (c1609: pub. 1778), when Hecate says to the rest of the coven:

There, take this unbaptised brat:
[Giving the dead body of a baby.]
Boil it well; preserve the fat.
You know 'tis precious to transfer
Our 'nointed flesh into the air,
In moonlight nights o'er steeple-tops. (I.II.18-22)

Middleton's play, a dead babe, and flying are all integral to contemporary versions of Macbeth.

5. Costs were divided "between the Kirk Session and the town". The total expenses for these two executions was 34 pounds, eleven shillings (Scots), of which the town's share was itemized as:

For ten loads of coals to burn them,	3.6. 8
For a tar barrel *	0.14. 0
For towes	0.6. 0
To him that brought the executioner	2.18. 0
To the executioner for his pains	8.14. 0
For his expenses here	0.16. 4
For one to go to Finmouth for the laird	<u>0.6. 0</u>
	17.1. 0

* The use of the tar barrel was to put the witch in it to be burned. At this time the Scots pound was valued at about 64 cents.
(Lea 1336)

6. Cotta, John. The Triall of Witch-craft, shewing The True and Right Methode of the Discovery: with a Confutation of erroneous wayes. London: George Purslowe for Samvel Rand. 1616.

7. Deuteronomy, Chapter 18:
There shall not be found among you any one...that useth
divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch.
(10)
Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard,
or a necromancer. (11)

Galatians, Chapter 5:
Now the works of the flesh are...Idolatry, witchcraft... (20)

Acts of the Apostles:

But there was a certain man called Simon...used sorcery, and bewitched the people (9)

And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries. (11)

Revelation:

But...sorcerers, and idolaters...shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: (21. 8)

For without are...sorcerers...idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.

Matthew:

There was brought unto him one possessed with a devil. (12. 22)

This fellow doth not cast out devils but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils. (12. 24)

But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you. (12. 28)

8. The examination and confession of certaine Wytches at Chemsforde in the Countie of Essex before the Quenes Maiesties Judges the XXVI daye of July anno 1566, and one of them put to death for the same offence. (Marshburn 1971:33)
9. A Detection of Damnable Drifters, Practized by Three Witches Arraigned at Chelmsford in Essex, at the Laste Assises There Holden, Whiche Were Executed in Aprill, 1579. Imprinted for Edward White, London. 1579. BL C. 27. a.8.
10. The Apprehension and confession of three notorious Witches, Arreigned and by Justice condemned and executed at Chelmsforde in the Countye of Essex, the 5. day of Julye, last past, 1589. With the manner of their divelish practices and keeping of their spirits, whose fourmes are heerein truelye proportioned 1589. Imprinted at London for Edward. (Marshburn 1971:62)

These proceedings are also the subject of a ballad, printed in Folio, that was entered in the Stationer's Register on July 29, 1589. (Appendix A).

11. A true and iust Recorde of the Information, Examination, and Confession of all the witches, taken at St. Osee (Osyth) in the countie of Essex: whereof some were executed, and other some entreated according to the determination of Lawe. Wherein all men may see what a pestilent people witches are, and how unworthy to lyve in a Christian Commonwealth. Written orderly, as the cases were tryed by evidence. By W.W. 1582. (Rosen 103)

12. Shakespeare uses "witch" or "witchcraft" in twenty-two of his thirty seven plays. He uses "devil" in thirty-one of his plays, a total of two hundred and thirty-six times. (Bartlett 1724)

13. Newes from Scotland, Declaring the Damnable life and death of Doctor Fian, a notable Sorcerer, who was burned at Edenbrough in January last, 1591. Which Doctor was regester to the Divell that sundry times preached at North Barrick Kirke, to a number of notorious Witches. With the true examination of the saide Doctor and Witches, as they uttered them in the presence of the Scottish King. (London, [1591]) (Rosen 386)

14. The True Law of Free Monarchies; or The Reciproock and Mutuall Duettie Betweixt a free King and his naturall Subjects. Edinburgh: Robert Waldegrave, Printer to the Kings Majestie. Anno Dom. 1598. Cum Privilegio Regie.

15. In the Coronation of our owne Kings...they giue their Oath, first to maintaine the Religion presently professed within their countrie....By the Law of Nature the King becomes a naturall Father to all his Lieges at his Coronation: And as the Father of his fatherly duty is bound to care for the nourishing, education, and vertuous gouernment of his children;... As the kindly father ought to foresee all inconuenients and dangers that may arise towards his children...so ought the King toward his people. As the fathers wrath and correction vpon any of his children that offendeth, ought to be by a fatherly chastisement seasoned with pitie, as long as there is any hope of amendment in them; so ought the King towards any of his Lieges that offend in that measure. (McIlwain 655-56)

16. It is easy to understand, therefore, how the age-old magic of the number seven wove itself into witchcraft; as did the equally sacred and potent number three. There is a pre-Christian belief in the potency of odd numbers, which is remarked on by the Roman poet Virgil....No wonder we constantly find the injunction in witchcraft, that the words of charms are to be repeated three times; or that concoctions of magical herbs should be of three, seven or nine different kinds, compounded together. (Valiente 256)

17. The weird sisters have the usual powers and habits of witches. They are hideous and bearded hags, with skinny fingers and choppy lips. They can hover through the air and disappear like bubbles, but these are no more than the common accomplishments of witches. They sail in sleeves which seems to have been particularly a Scottish habit....They have control of the winds, which is again no more than is usual for witches; they kill swine, keep familiars and lay a pining sickness on those who offend them. They can change into animal shapes, though they must be tailless.
(Briggs 79-80)

18. Her statue of triple form, the queen of three worlds...stood at the crossroads, a haunted spot where, according to Plato (Laws 873b), might be thrown the corpse of the murderer after execution, unwept, unburied, the prey of dogs and crows. Her rites were monstrous, but to be respected and revered; her worshippers were accursed, but to be dreaded and placated; her prayers blasphemy; her sacrifices impious and terrible. (Summers 7-8)

19. In 1692 Hutchinson became vicar at Bury St. Edmunds, the scene of notorious witch trials in 1622, and of mass round-ups by Mathew Hopkins in 1645. Hutchinson gathered many stories that still circulated, and also interviewed many survivors of the hunt. After the publication of his Historical Essay Concerning Witchcraft in 1718, few of the intellectual elite dared promulgate the old beliefs. His attention to the political motives of persecutions and the attention given the testimony of young children assured the success of his argument. His credibility and reputation were such that, in 1721, he was named bishop of Down and Connor in Ireland. He died there in 1739.

20. Francis Hutchinson's Historical Essay...must rank with Reginald Scot's Discoverie as one of the great classics of English witch literature. Hutchinson had read all the accounts of trials in England - so far as he could find them - and had systematized them in chronological order, so as to give a conspectus of the whole subject. So nearly was his point of view that of our own day that it would be idle to rehearse his arguments. A man with warm sympathies for the oppressed, he had been led probably by the case of Jane Wenham, with whom he had talked, to make a personal investigation of all cases that came at all within the ken of those living. Whoever shall write the final story of English witchcraft will find himself still dependent upon this eighteenth century historian.

Hutchinson's work was the last chapter in the witch controversy. There was nothing more to say. (Notestein 342-43)

Appendix A

A NEW BALLAD OF THE LIFE AND DEATHS OF THREE
WITCHES ARRAYNED AND EXECUTED AT CHILMSFORD

5 JULY 1589

(To the tune of "Bragandary Down", & etc.)

I

Last Christians all unto my Song,
"I will move your Hearts to Grace,
That Dreadful Witchcraft hath been done,
Of late about this place,
But Three that cried the Devil's Name
With those who did them follow,
Now to Justice are brought home
To swing upon our Gallow

II

There's scarce a Month within these Years
But Witchcraft foul is done,
And many are the weeping tears
These Satan's Friends have rung,
Though they sought Mercy ere the rope
Soon as the Judgment's read,
Who gainsays the Devil's Hope
Is all when they are Dead?

III

A vile long life they have run on
Regarding not their End,
Their Hearts still bent to cruelty
Not minding to Amend,
Men and cattle they Bewitched
No Peace they gave to Rest,
But yet, in turn the parts were switched
By Marks upon their Breasts

IV

As to the Story now to tell
The Truth I will Declare,
It was the Witches' Children small
That they did not Beware,
For God into these Infants' Hearts
Did pour the Light of Reason,
And all against their Mothers spoke
Of Witchcraft and of Treason

V

Evil were the tales of their demands
Sprung from the Depths of Hell,
And terrible the work of their Commands
As did the children tell,
Now has the Judge the Sentence read
And ended in our town,
The rule of Imps and Spells and Dread
For many miles aroun'

VI

So listen Christians to my Song,
The Hangman's swung his rope,
And on these Gallows hath been done
An end to Satan's Hope,
Give the News from Chelmsford Town,
To all the world be spread,
A crew of Evil Witches have gone Down
Hang'd by the neck, all three are Dead

(Repeat)

'Come away, come away, Hecate', probably by Robert
 Pinson, is given here in the version from the Drexel MS. 4175. Lunt. (a
 setting is also extant in Fitzwilliam MS. 52. D ff. 107v-8v).

Come a-way ———— Come a-way Hecate, Hecate. O come a-
 way. I come, I come, I come with all the speed I may with
 all the speed I may where's staidin? where's heare
 Puck? heare and hoppro too, wee lacke but you, wee —
 lacke ut you Come a-wayge make up the counte, I will but mynle

and then I mounte, I will but mynle and then I mounte heare comes one downe to
 fetch his dues a kisse, a cull a sp of blood and why thou
 stayest so longe I muse, I muse, since y' ayre soe fresh and good.
 O art thou come what newe, what newe all goes will to our de-
 light, ei - ther come or els re - fuse, re - fuse now I am founne
 for the flight, now I goe, O now I — flye Mad-ken my swarte
 spirit and I O what a chayne he pleas-ure is this to

ride in the art whiz' moons shinea fore, and (feast) a sarge, a toy, a kisse,

o - ver woods, hight rocks, a mountains o - ver seas our (mis - tre) fountains

o - ver stupes, towers, a lar-rilla, we fly by night might troops of spirits:

no rage o' bells w o' tares sound, no hoiks of

woodes, nor gylts of hounds, no nor the nose of —

wa - ter breach, nor can-nons thowls o' heght can reach

Appendix c

The Paper's Powder: Treason -

Die Insel Batavia besitzet In Memoriam Classis Inveniens subversalabre

Proditionis Notante detecta dilatoria.

[illegible]

<p>IN DESERTUS OCTAVI, montibus Armo Cast. Per montes fuitus vixit ppe.</p> <p>In diei nona repugnans fatis Edwardus noster erat.</p> <p>FLAMMIS EIGHT spemque armis non potuit suavit our Pearlful Lord came on to fight; He wonder and wonder, and fire in one confine. To help the ENGLISH, furbate SPAINES define.</p> <p>In diei nona repugnans fatis Edwardus noster erat.</p> <p>FLAMMIS EIGHT spemque armis non potuit suavit our Pearlful Lord came on to fight; He wonder and wonder, and fire in one confine. To help the ENGLISH, furbate SPAINES define.</p>	<p>Positione sua nona positione perstant. Perant perantio ipse. proinde prodicio</p> <p>In diei nona repugnans fatis Edwardus noster erat.</p> <p>FLAMMIS EIGHT spemque armis non potuit suavit our Pearlful Lord came on to fight; He wonder and wonder, and fire in one confine. To help the ENGLISH, furbate SPAINES define.</p> <p>In diei nona repugnans fatis Edwardus noster erat.</p> <p>FLAMMIS EIGHT spemque armis non potuit suavit our Pearlful Lord came on to fight; He wonder and wonder, and fire in one confine. To help the ENGLISH, furbate SPAINES define.</p>	<p>Passo o fatis diei, luc. temp. IN TANTUM fatis perantio noster erat.</p> <p>In diei nona repugnans fatis Edwardus noster erat.</p> <p>FLAMMIS EIGHT spemque armis non potuit suavit our Pearlful Lord came on to fight; He wonder and wonder, and fire in one confine. To help the ENGLISH, furbate SPAINES define.</p> <p>In diei nona repugnans fatis Edwardus noster erat.</p> <p>FLAMMIS EIGHT spemque armis non potuit suavit our Pearlful Lord came on to fight; He wonder and wonder, and fire in one confine. To help the ENGLISH, furbate SPAINES define.</p>
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A seventeenth-century broadsheet showing Great Britain's deliverance from papist machinations: on the left a storm wrecks the Spanish Armada, on the right Guy Fawkes prepares to blow up Parliament but the eye of God is watching him, and in the centre the Pope conspires with, amongst others, the devil, to ruin Britain on 5 November.

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