“I am as I have Spoken”: The Act of Naming in *Macbeth*

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Résumé : *Beaucoup de l'action de Macbeth se caractérise par ce que la théorie des actes de parole appellerait des actes performatifs, des actes de nomination qui non seulement identifient la personne ou la chose nommée mais aussi effectuent un changement dans le monde de la pièce. Tels actes de parole, compris dans toutes leurs manifestations multiples, sont étroitement liés à la motivation de Macbeth ainsi qu'à d'autres aspects de la pièce, y compris quelques-uns de ses moments les plus obscurs.*

The motives commonly attributed to Macbeth seem never to satisfy. It is not enough to say that he is moved by that Renaissance vice known as ambition, for he is plagued by doubts before and after the murder; no tyrant ever enjoyed his power less. Nor is it enough to say that he is the victim of fate or of a cunning and manipulative wife. Edgar Stoll, in his search for Macbeth's motive, said that the influence of fate, as represented either by the witches or by Lady Macbeth, “is not what we ordinarily call motivation, not psychology.”¹ Shakespeare, said Stoll, seems deliberately to have altered Holinshed, his source, so as to obscure any plausible motive. Gone is the legitimate quarrel between Macbeth and Duncan, and gone too are Duncan's incompetent and negligent administration and Macbeth's ten successful years on the throne.² There was an obvious reason for these changes. Shakespeare was mindful of the fact that James I was likely to identify to some extent with Duncan, and also with Banquo, whom he could claim as a blood relation. It was prudent, therefore, of Shakespeare to make a good character out of Banquo, who in Holinshed was in fact among the conspirators. Stoll, apparently frustrated by such changes, was led to conclude that Shakespeare's concern was less to provide his characters with motives than to set them “in a state of high commotion, and thus to move and elevate the

audience in turn.”³ This stripping away of obvious motives, however, also happened to be part of Shakespeare’s art. When he wrote *Othello*, for instance, he altered Cinzio’s *novella* by creating Roderigo, who embodies the romantic or erotic motive, and thereby reduced Iago’s motive to an elemental evil. Macbeth’s motive, it seems to me, is categorically different from Iago’s but similarly elemental. It is, in short, a desire to shape his own identity in a new and unfamiliar world in which the whole question of identity is inseparable from human utterance. This motive, to my knowledge, has yet to be thoroughly examined; such an examination, moreover, illuminates so much else in the play as to justify a new reading of it.

Among the first images of this play, the most striking is that of Macbeth’s sword, which, wielded in the service of Scotland, has “smok’d with bloody execution” and “unseam’d” the enemy “from the nave to th’ chops” (I.ii.18-22).⁴ It comes through the report of an anonymous sergeant who stumbles onto the stage, himself covered in the blood and wounds of battle. “Brave Macbeth,” he says, “well he deserves that name” (I.ii.16), and thus, in this memorable way, is announced what I believe is the play’s most insistent thematic concern: the peculiarly human act of naming. David Young, towards the end of his profound and lucid chapter on *Macbeth*, remarks upon the “gnomic speech” of the characters and observes that in the world of this play “names have a special value.”⁵ Indeed, the act of naming, as I hope to show, is not only essential to Macbeth’s motive but exerts a powerful shaping force on the whole play, informing all of its major movements and reaching deep into some of its obscurest areas.⁶

In *Macbeth*, as in so many other Shakespearean plays, the names of some of the characters work as rather obvious ironic puns. When Banquo’s son escapes the murderers, for example, we hear his father cry, “Fly, good Fleance, fly, fly, fly!” (III.iii.17). Banquo’s own name is suggestive of his bountiful progeny and is associated, of course, with his appearance at the grim banquet. Even Seyton’s name can be seen as a pun, for like the devil, he prepares Macbeth, literally dresses him, for his journey to hell.⁷ This toying with proper names, however, is only a sign of a much deeper concern. In this play not only does the very word “name” abound, but so do its synonyms, such as “title,” “addition,” “signs” and “terms,” and related verbs such as “pronounce,” “blaspheme,” or simply “speak.” My concern in this study, then, is not only with proper names. In *Macbeth* there is a most conspicuous rhetorical feature that to my knowledge has not yet received its due critical attention: the catalogue, or list. From the mouths of the witches, but also from those of several main characters, come tumbling forth whole catalogues of names, names of inanimate things and at times of people too, but more especially of their qualities. Such moments, I believe, constitute

“performatives,” speech acts of the kind described by J. L. Austin, which do not merely represent a given reality but actually bring it into being. They are often ceremonial, as is the case with a knighting or crowning, where the utterance itself, says Austin, is usually the “leading incident in the performance of the act.”⁸ But performatives do not have to be ceremonial, or at least not obviously so. In *Macbeth*, when catalogues of names are uttered, they are almost always uttered with aggressiveness, and, significantly, hardly ever with complete confidence. As such, these utterances bear a great resemblance to speech acts called “assertions,” which, as described by Mary Louise Pratt, are “appropriate” only when there is, in the mind of both the speaker and the listener, “a real or supposed chance of its being false.”⁹ The speaker who makes an assertion, says Pratt,

is not only reporting but also verbally *displaying* a state of affairs, inviting his addressee(s) to join him in contemplating it, evaluating it, and responding to it. His point is to produce in his hearers not only belief but also an imaginative and affective involvement in the state of affairs he is representing and an evaluative stance toward it. He intends them to share his wonder, amusement, terror, or admiration of the event. Ultimately, it would seem, what he is after is an *interpretation* of the problematic event, an assignment of meaning and value supported by the consensus of himself and his hearers.¹⁰

It is precisely in this way that the characters of *Macbeth* come to know themselves and their world; indeed, it is in this way that they actually bring themselves and their world into being, for the catalogues in *Macbeth* function not only as assertions but also as performatives — they too, like acts of naming, are creative.¹¹ In the world of this play, the act of naming, the act of verbally identifying realities — be they objective or subjective — is actually constitutive, even if, as I will try to show, it sometimes goes wrong.¹² As Jane Donawerth puts it, by “speaking and listening,” the characters in Shakespeare’s later plays “create and transform their world — and themselves — for better or for worse.”¹³

To return, then, to the bloody sergeant’s report. Upon hearing it, Duncan is moved to exercise what amounts to his kingly authority over the identities of his men: he pronounces Macbeth Thane of Cawdor. Macbeth has not only deserved this new title; it has been made available by the first Thane of Cawdor, a traitor who has proved himself no longer worthy of it, indeed no longer worthy of the existence which it signifies. “No more that Thane of Cawdor shall deceive / Our bosom interest,” says Duncan to Rosse, “Go pronounce his present death, / And with his former title greet Macbeth” (I.ii.63–65). Thus the king’s utterance both creates and destroys. Before this act of naming is formally carried out, however, another, more mysterious one takes place. When Macbeth meets the witches, they hail him not only

as Thane of Glamis but as Thane of Cawdor and as king (I.iii.48-50). There is no obvious reason to be alarmed by this, at least not so far as Banquo is concerned. "Good sir," he says to Macbeth, "why do you start, and seem to fear / Things that do sound so fair?" (I.iii.51-52). Macbeth is unnerved because these names are imposed on him forcibly. As he says, later in the play, the witches "put the name of king upon me" (III.i.57). What he fears is not that the witches will reveal his secret ambition; publicly, he may deny their authority.¹⁴ His fear, rather, seems to be more private. In the past, if he had entertained a desire to usurp the throne, he had kept it safely unexpressed, or at least contained within the walls of his castle. Now that his desire has been articulated, or named, by someone else, he fears that he has lost a measure of control over it, and therefore over himself. This fear is heightened with the arrival of Rosse, who greets Macbeth in a way that recalls and verifies the predictions of the witches. The king, says Rosse, "bade me call thee Thane of Cawdor; / In which addition, hail, most worthy thane, / For it is thine" (I.iii.105-7). The authority of the king, unlike that of the witches, cannot be denied; what had been a private fantasy now becomes more real to him than anything else, and he is terrified. "My thought," he says, "whose murder yet is but fantastical, / Shakes so my single state of man that function / Is smother'd in surmise, and nothing is / But what is not" (I.iii.139-42).¹⁵ This fear is a sign that Macbeth, to whom the creative power of language is still something of a mystery at this point, has begun to wake up to the reality that his world is fundamentally verbal, and that if he does not learn to use its language as well as he can use a sword, he will run the risk of having his very identity formed, or even deformed, by others. Hence his motive: to take control of his own identity, of his own name.

Banquo, meanwhile, is bold and inquisitive with the witches. He turns to them and asks, "Are ye fantastical, or that indeed / Which outwardly ye show?" and commands them to answer "I'th' name of truth" (I.iii.52-54). This moment is the first of several in this play when characters show their virtue by bravely seeking out a verbal expression of the truth, either about themselves or about others, and demanding that it be spoken, as is the case here, or speaking it themselves, and then vigorously questioning its validity. What they want is to *hear* assertions that are at least purported to be true, so that they may be interpreted by the community and then either validated or refuted. The principal characters of this play, and even some of the minor ones, are all engaged, to one degree or another, in such testing of assertions. This is the way in which the characters of *Macbeth* answer the moral imperative to know themselves, an imperative, by the way, which is articulated quite explicitly. Lady Macduff, who would like to know why her

husband has left Scotland at a time of such danger, gets the following answer from Rosse:

I pray you school yourself. But for your husband,
He is noble, wise, judicious, and best knows
The fits o' th' season. I dare not speak much further,
But cruel are the times when we are traitors,
And do not know ourselves; when we hold rumor
From what we fear, yet know not what we fear,
But float upon a wild and violent sea
Each way, and move. (IV.ii.15–22)

To leave the self unexamined is, in the world of this play, to be at the mercy of the chaos of the unnamed, the “wild and violent sea” within, and perhaps ultimately to drown.

Shakespeare, a good Renaissance humanist, made quite a good little humanist of Macduff's son. He is still young, still acquiring language, still learning the names of human qualities. Having overheard what Rosse has said, young Macduff vigorously questions his mother about the most significant name he has overheard:

SON: Was my father a traitor, mother?
L. MACD: Ay, that he was.
SON: What is a traitor?
L. MACD: Why, one that swears and lies.
SON: And be all traitors that do so?
L. MACD: Every one that does so is a traitor, and must be hang'd.
SON: And must they all be hang'd that swear and lie?
L. MACD: Every one.
SON: Who must hang them?
L. MACD: Why, the honest men.
SON: Then the liars and swearers are fools; for
there are liars and swearers enow to beat the honest
men and hang up them. (IV.ii.44–59)

Clearly, the boy has “schooled” himself. He has mastered the art of dialogue, the purpose of which is to seek out and give voice to the truth. And he has come to understand the nature of lying too, how words, or names, may be abused, and how reality, as a result, may be distorted. When the murderer calls Macduff a traitor, the boy replies with an epithet of his own — “Thou li'st, thou shag-ear'd villain!” (IV.ii.83) — the truth of which is unequivocal.¹⁶ In this way, if only to his own satisfaction, young Macduff clears his father's name, and although the boy is slaughtered immediately thereafter,

his final utterance is a real victory. It is as if Shakespeare had endowed him with an understanding of what Montaigne had said about lying:

Our intelligence being onely conducted by the way of the Word: Who so falsifieth the same, betraieth publik society. It is the onely instrument, by meanes wherof our wils and thoughts are communicated: it is the interpretour of our soules: If that faile us we hold our selves no more, we enter-know one another no longer. If it deceive us, it breaketh al our commerce, and dissolveth al bonds of our policie.¹⁷

While young Macduff is being murdered, his father is in the safety of England struggling with his conscience. Has he been a coward, he wonders, for leaving Scotland and his family in a time of such danger? Malcolm asks him, “Why in that rawness left you wife and child, / Those precious motives, those strong knots of love, / Without leave-taking?” (IV.iii.26–28). Macduff’s response is evasive. His talk is all about his public life, about Scotland and his loyalty to it: “Bleed, bleed, poor country!” (IV.iii.31). He takes refuge in this expression of patriotic feeling because, like Macbeth, he is better armed at this point for the conventional battlefield and lacks the courage, or the wherewithal, to question his humanity and seek out the names of his virtues and his vices. The ability to brave this task comes to him moments later, towards the end of the scene, when he is told that his wife and children have been murdered. He questions Rosse, the bearer of the grim news, in an increasingly simple and aggressive manner. “My children too?” he asks, then two lines later, “My wife kill’d too?” and three lines later, “All my pretty ones? / Did you say all? / O hell-kite! All? / What, all my pretty chickens, and their dam, / At one fell swoop?” (IV.iii.211, 213, 216–19). Rosse must repeat the same painful answers several times. It is as if hearing the truth uttered over and over again strengthens Macduff, so that in the end, when the interrogation is over, he can take responsibility for the dreadful reality he has invoked and call himself “Sinful Macduff” (IV.iii.224). Thus Malcolm’s question — “Why in that rawness left you wife and child?” — finally receives a direct answer.

Is it only the horror of this news, however, that strengthens Macduff and clarifies his vision? Of great interest is what happens just before Rosse arrives; it is perhaps the most obscure passage in the entire play. Malcolm claims to be tainted with a whole catalogue of faults and to be capable of a host of vicious crimes. Most critics are content to say that he is testing Macduff to see if he is a traitor. If Macduff is a traitor, he will approve of the viciousness Malcolm feigns and perhaps expose himself as one of Macbeth’s allies. If Macduff is virtuous, he will see through Malcolm’s charade and thereby prove that he is on the side of good, that he recognizes good when he sees it, even when it is in disguise. But Macduff’s reaction is

neither the one nor the other. Instead, he is gradually persuaded by Malcolm's self-accusation and grows so dispirited that he vows to exile himself. This reaction forces Malcolm to retract all that he has said, and to do so in a way that might seem abrupt and wooden. Some critics, such as Derek Traversi, have called this scene a flaw. "In terms of common realism," Traversi says, "Malcolm's change of attitude is neither adequately motivated nor convincing." The scene must therefore be regarded as a "deliberate abandonment of realism." His explanation is that Malcolm's catalogue of faults "is not meant to be intrinsically probable; it simply gathers up those really associated with Macbeth," who represents a "universal disorder," opposed to which is a universal virtue, represented of course by Malcolm. On this level of the play, Macbeth and Malcolm function as symbols; indeed, the whole scene is an "experiment" in symbolism, and if it is not an entirely successful one, the problem is Shakespeare's.¹⁸ Similarly, L. C. Knights suggests that the scene is obscure because we mistake the characters "for real persons"; we cannot understand it "unless we realize its function as choric commentary," for Malcolm here "has ceased to be a person." The scene can be read, he says, in "no other way."¹⁹

It seems to me that both Traversi and Knights are mistaken. There is nothing symbolic about this scene, nor is it an "abandonment of realism." On the contrary, what Shakespeare is dramatizing here is quite realistic: how two men arrive at self-knowledge through speech, or — if one believes that all reality is subjective — how two men create themselves through speech. Early in this passage, Malcolm reveals a heightened sensitivity to the spoken word. Macbeth's "sole name," he says, "blisters our tongues" (IV.iii.12). It reminds Malcolm that "a good and virtuous nature," even one such as his own, "may recoil / In an imperial charge" (IV.iii.19-20). Malcolm, along with Donalbain, has at this point already been accused of murder: "We hear our bloody cousins are bestow'd / In England and in Ireland," says Macbeth, "not confessing / Their cruel parricide, filling their hearers / With strange invention" (III.i.29-32). Although he is innocent, Malcolm does, like everyone else in this play, have a potential for evil, and the accusations muttered in Scotland have named that potential and made him feel its reality more acutely than ever before. Those accusations, however, have been made in his absence, after his flight from Macbeth's castle, and were based on nothing concrete. And it seems, as the following discussion will show, that Malcolm has gone to England in order to finish the job: to make the inward journey, that is, and come to know all of his imperfections for himself, and by name. But before looking within, he will look without, at Macbeth. This is a pattern, a way of learning, which will be repeated later, but with tragic imperfection, by Macbeth himself.

When Malcolm says that his “confineless harms” would make Macbeth seem a “lamb” by comparison, Macduff protests that “Not in the legions / Of horrid hell can come a devil more damn’d / In evils to top Macbeth” (IV.iii.50–57). Malcolm must see this notion as profoundly naïve, as it incites him to engage in a series of the most aggressive and impassioned acts of naming in the entire play. The catalogue fashion of these outbursts is something which recurs, as I have said, with conspicuous frequency in this play; in fact, it is one of its distinguishing rhetorical features. He begins by calling Macbeth

bloody,
Luxurious, avaricious, false, deceitful,
Sudden, malicious, smacking of every sin,
That has a name,

but “there’s no bottom, none,” he says, to his own “voluptuousness”:

Your wives, your daughters,
Your matrons, and your maids could not fill up
The cestern of my lust, and my desire
All continent impediments would o’erbear
That did oppose my will. Better Macbeth
Than such an one to reign. (IV.iii.57–66)

As for the “king-becoming graces,”

As justice, verity, temp’rance, stableness,
Bounty, perseverance, mercy, lowliness,
Devotion, patience, courage, fortitude,
I have no relish of them, but abound
In the division of each several crime,
Acting it many ways. (IV.iii.91–97)

“If such a one be fit to govern,” he says to Macduff, “speak. I am as I have spoken” (IV.iii.101–2). Malcolm is, indeed, as he has spoken; he is quite capable of the evil he has invoked, if only because he is a fallen man. Having invoked, or named, his evil potential, however, he is now conscious of it; he has objectified it and thus gained a measure of control over it.

What Malcolm does here is to play a very serious game, of exactly the kind that Pratt describes:

As students of play have known for a long time, where there is mimetic hostility, there is also real hostility. The insulated contexts like games, rituals, and literary works in which we act out verbal and non-verbal violence are commonly believed to serve the

social function of defusing and redirecting real hostility, or of allowing people to express real hostility in a nondestructive way.²⁰

The value of play, however, is something that Macduff is slow to learn. "Such welcome and unwelcome things at once," he says, "'Tis hard to reconcile" (IV.iii.138–39). Early on, when he discovers the murdered Duncan, he is clearly afraid of giving voice to what he has seen: "O horror, horror, horror! Tongue nor heart / Cannot conceive nor name thee!" and "Do not bid me speak; / See, and then speak yourselves." He seems to fear that speaking might be tantamount to the execution of a deed. But even then, he gradually finds the courage to give voice to what he has seen, in a bold and passionate crying out of names, both of people and of the crime:

Awake, awake!
Ring the alarum-bell! Murther and treason!
Banquo and Donalbain! Malcolm, awake!
Shake off this downy sleep, death's counterfeit,
And look on death itself! Up, up, and see
The great doom's image! Malcolm! Banquo!
As from your graves rise up, and walk like sprites,
To countenance this horror! Ring the bell. (II.iii.64–80)

It is a sign that he is capable of learning. And thus it is that later, in the difficult third scene of Act IV, Malcolm's impassioned self-accusation can unsettle Macduff and raise him to a higher awareness of the imperative to know oneself and of the role that speech must play in satisfying it. Malcolm, he says, "by his own interdiction stands accus'd, / And does blaspheme his breed" (IV.iii.107–8). Convinced and appalled, Macduff prepares to leave: "Fare thee well," he says, "These evils thou repeat'st upon thyself / Hath banish'd me from Scotland" (IV.iii.111–13). Malcolm must then disabuse him by reversing what he has said, which he does by naming his good potentialities, in the same catalogue fashion:

Macduff, this noble passion,
Child of integrity, hath from my soul
Wip'd the black scruples, reconcil'd my thoughts
To thy good truth and honor.
.....
... But God above
Deal between thee and me! for even now
I put myself to thy direction, and
Unspeak mine own detraction; here abjure
The taints and blames I laid upon myself,
For strangers to my nature. I am yet

Unknown to woman, never was forsworn,
 Scarcely have coveted what was mine own,
 At no time broke my faith, would not betray
 The devil to his fellow, and delight
 No less in truth than life. My first false speaking
 Was this upon myself. What I am truly
 Is thine and my poor country's to command. (IV.iii.114–17; 120–32)

The suggestion here is that what is spoken can also be unspoken, that an evil reality, invoked by one act of naming, may be subdued by a second, and opposite, act of naming.²¹

By “noble passion” Malcolm means, of course, Macduff’s expression of outrage, the eloquence of which has proved his innocence, or “wip’d” the “black scruples” from Malcolm’s mind. And Macduff, having witnessed Malcolm’s self-condemnation and its reversal, will soon go through the very same experience and discover the complexities and contradictions of his own identity, in particular, that in abandoning his family he has been “sinful Macduff,” or something of a coward. Both characters remain confused and unsure until they begin to speak and listen, until their assertions, expressed with great passion, are either validated or refuted. Above all, however, both men learn, in this English setting, that identity is discovered, or made, through the language of dialogue. “One of the most important ways we have,” says Pratt, “of dealing with the unexpected, uncertain, unintelligible aspects of our lives is to share and interpret them collectively. Carrying out this re-creative, interpretive process is one of the most important uses we make of language.”²² One might observe here, as well, that such moments in *Macbeth* bear out the truth of an important observation that Donawerth makes: “it is as if Shakespeare’s stage practice developed in the way that Elizabethan ideas on the actors’ language developed: from the expression of the life and force of human passions to the communication of men’s power to remake themselves.”²³

The problem with Macbeth is that the only life he has known has been that of a soldier; he has been a man of action, not of words. His enemies have been threats to the common good, not to the private; they have always come from without, never, until now, from within. He can use words marvelously well, but only in an outward way, as weapons against others. As Malcolm says to Macduff, “Devilish Macbeth / By many of these trains hath sought to win me / From over-credulous haste” (IV.iii.117–19). That gruesome early image, of Macbeth’s smoking sword unseaming his enemy “from the navel to th’chops,” seems strangely archaic, powerfully suggestive of that boldness of action one finds in the medieval warrior who is happily unimpeded by thoughts of the self. The image would not be out of place in the

Morte Darthur, in which characters are defined less by how they think and feel, or by what they say or hear, than by what they do. Macbeth's attempt to live as a warrior indoors, so to speak — surely the setting is symbolic of the life within — is catastrophic. "What seems to happen to Macbeth," as Young puts it, "is that the vividness of his imagination makes him feel victimized by his thoughts in a way that utterance cannot resolve or address. To think of murder and to talk of murder are hallucinatory horrors only laid to rest in the mind by converting them into deeds, though the relief his actions provide is obviously not what Macbeth hoped it would be."²⁴ The tragedy of Macbeth, one might say, is that of the medieval warrior taken by surprise by the dawning of the Renaissance, of humanism, of a world in which one's integrity depends on one's ability to look within and to name what is there. The contrast between these two worlds is also reflected in the contrast between Hamlet and his father, and embodied in the single figure of Falstaff, who is old enough — and in every sense large enough — to have lived fully in both worlds.

Macbeth becomes uncomfortably aware of this new form of integrity early in the play. It is an awareness that becomes especially keen when he witnesses Malcolm receiving his new title. Malcolm, says Duncan,

. . . we name hereafter
The Prince of Cumberland; which honor must
Not unaccompanied invest him only,
But signs of nobleness, like stars, shall shine
On all deservers. (I.iv.38–42)

This news angers Macbeth, as he reveals in an aside: "The Prince of Cumberland!" he says to himself, as if disgusted by the very sound of the name (I.iv.48). Macbeth has been among the "deservers," but he has not been deserving enough to receive his new title directly from its source, nor with such ceremony. His new title, then, his new sign of nobleness, shines dimmer than Malcolm's does.²⁵ Particularly interesting is Macbeth's tone when he volunteers to make arrangements for the celebration that will follow. "The rest," he says to Duncan, "is labor, which is not us'd for you. / I'll be myself the harbinger, and make joyful / The hearing of my wife with your approach; / So humbly take my leave" (I.iv.44–47). This could be taken as deep and quiet sarcasm, lost of course on Duncan, on whom so much else is lost as well,²⁶ but expressive of Macbeth's resentment at the suggestion that he will forever be Duncan's humble laborer, bloodying himself in battle for the good of the kingdom—that he will forever depend on Duncan for nominal improvements in his conditions. "My worthy Cawdor!" (I.iv.47), Duncan replies, unwittingly bringing home the point that he owns Macbeth and the

name he has lent him. Shakespeare's Duncan, although quite benevolent, is nevertheless a king who takes his power over men for granted. How easy it is for him to say, of the first Cawdor, "What he hath lost, noble Macbeth hath won" (I.ii.67). The irony here is that Duncan, again unwittingly, suggests that Macbeth has inherited not only Cawdor's name but also the ambition that will make him a traitor.

But what exactly is the nature of Macbeth's ambition? Lady Macbeth says that her husband is "not without ambition, but without / The illness should attend it" (I.v.19–20). If by "illness" she means the desire to rule over all men, then perhaps she is quite correct, for Macbeth's ambition is only to rule over himself. This rather private desire, which is what moves him throughout the play, is terribly powerful, as is made clear towards the end. When he hears that "Macduff was from his mother's womb / Untimely ripp'd" (V.viii.15–16), Macbeth cowers, for the witches' prophecies of course are about to be entirely fulfilled. "I'll not fight with thee," he says to Macduff, who offers the following alternative:

Then yield thee, coward,
And live to be the show and gaze o' th' time!
We'll have thee, as our rarer monsters are,
Painted upon a pole, and underwrit,
"Here may you see the tyrant." (V.viii.22–27)

Through his deeds, Macbeth has lost his right to all of his titles; he has drained them of their meaning, or perhaps one should say he has failed to endow them with meaning, for proper names are not, in and of themselves, meaningful. Proper names, says John Searle, "function not as descriptions, but as pegs on which to hang descriptions."²⁷ In effect, Macbeth has become nameless; and to be nameless, to be "outside the frontier of language," as Gordon puts it, is to be monstrous.²⁸ Those who are within the frontier of language — that is, those who are civilized — are compelled to name and thereby to contain all monsters as threats to the established order. Thus Macbeth will be renamed once again, this time not Cawdor or King but rather "the tyrant." He is moved to fight here not by the threat of death but by that of being renamed by his enemy.²⁹

The horror of what he has become descends upon him only gradually, and only gradually does he understand that he must sooner or later give voice to it. At first he finds his crime in other men, the hired murderers, and subjects them to a session of cruel name-calling. When the first one says that he and his companion are "men," that they have the courage to kill, Macbeth responds contemptuously:

Ay, in the catalogue ye go for men,
 As hounds and greyhounds, mungrels, spaniels, curs,
 Shoughs, water-rugs, and demi-wolves are clipt
 All by the name of dogs. (III.i.91–94)

This recitation is a kind of rehearsal, which allows Macbeth to discover the language he needs in order to examine and to know himself. A similar moment occurs later, when his final crisis is imminent. “Bring me no more reports,” he says to his attendants and the doctor, “let them fly all. / Till Birnan wood remove to Dunsinane/ I cannot taint with fear” (V.iii.1-3). But a report — that the English troops are approaching — does arrive, borne, significantly, by a nameless servant, a human incarnation of “th’name of truth.” He is the unknown that so terrifies Macbeth. It is profoundly appropriate, therefore, that Macbeth should attack him by naming him in the most degrading ways:

The devil damn thee black, thou cream-fac’d loon!
 Where got’st thou that goose-look?

 Go prick thy face, and over-red thy fear,
 Thou lily-liver’d boy. What soldiers, patch?
 Death of thy soul! those linen cheeks of thine
 Are counsellors to fear. What soldiers, whey-face? (V.iii.11–12, 14–17)

The tongue is a weapon he has learned to wield quite well; but he still wields it as he would the sword, against others, against the enemy without, especially when that enemy reminds him of the one within. Macbeth is not very different, after all, from the murderers he has hired, but he is too “lily-liver’d” himself, perhaps, to admit it.

Indeed, for much of the play Macbeth is terrified of words. Especially illustrative is his terror of being questioned. “I pray you speak not,” says Lady Macbeth at the grim banquet, for Macbeth “grows worse and worse” and “question enrages him” (III.iv.116–17). To be questioned is to be asked to utter “th’name of truth” and thereby to become conscious of one’s motives; it is, ultimately, to lose the innocence that had made “brave Macbeth,” the man of action, possible. His ability to commit murder depends on his remaining ignorant of the nature of the act. He commands the stars, therefore, to hide his “black and deep desires,” his eye to “wink” at his hand (I.iv.50-52). That he should speak indirectly so much of the time is most significant. Immediately after Malcolm is named Prince of Cumberland, Macbeth tells himself in an aside what he must do in order to take the crown. Here, he cannot be direct even with himself. He resorts to harmless meta-

phors, calling Cumberland, for example, a “step” which he “must o’erleap” (I.iv.48–49). Especially telling is that he takes refuge in the evasive use of pronouns, harmless substitutes for the real names of his terrible design: “let that be / Which the eye fears, when it is done, to see” (I.iv.52–53). Murder is not murder but rather “that” or “which” or “it.” The letter he writes to his wife might be an opportunity for him to express his “black and deep desires” plainly, but here too he is indirect, and the word “ignorant” rings ironic. “This have I thought good to deliver thee,” he writes, “that thou mightst not lose the dues of rejoicing by being ignorant of what greatness is promis’d thee” (I.v.10–13). She knows this habit well and seems to mock it in her response, which is so full of pronouns as to seem a parody of her husband:

What thou wouldst highly,
That wouldst thou holily; wouldst not play false,
And yet wouldst wrongly win. Thou’ldst have, great Glamis,
That which cries, “Thus thou must do,” if thou have it;
And that which rather thou dost fear to do
Than wishest should be undone. Hie thee hither,
That I may pour my spirits in thine ear,
And chastise with the valor of my tongue
All that impedes thee from the golden round,
Which fate and metaphysical aid doth seem
To have thee crown’d withal. (I.v.20–30)

Later Macbeth, quite unable still to utter the name of the crime he has pondered, says, “We will proceed no further in this business” (I.vii.31), and continues to resort to indirection even after the murder.³⁰ “I have done the deed,” he says to his wife (II.ii.14). He is afraid of words, not so much because they might expose him as because they bring a clarity of inward vision that will make him cower. In the world of *Macbeth*, as in the world of *Hamlet*, giving voice to one’s motives results in a heightened awareness that makes action difficult. “Words to the heat of deeds,” says Macbeth, “too cold breath gives” (II.i.61). Indeed, he becomes so acutely sensitive to language that all noises become potential bearers of “th’name of truth.” “Didst thou not hear a noise?” he asks his wife, immediately after he has murdered Duncan (II.ii.14). This fear will culminate, of course, in the terrible knocking at the door, the meaning of which de Quincey so eloquently explained.

The play’s emphasis on naming also helps to explain the estrangement that occurs between Macbeth and his wife immediately after Duncan’s murder. Lady Macbeth, who had promised to be so brave, now cowers and resorts to an evasiveness far more willful than her husband’s. “Consider it

not so deeply,” she tells him, when he tries to describe what has happened in Duncan’s sleeping chamber. “These deeds,” she says, “must not be thought / After these ways; so, it will make us mad” (II.ii.27, 30–31). She refuses to play the part of the listener, whose duty, in a community held together by speech, is to contemplate, evaluate, and respond to the assertions of the speaker. The truth, therefore, left unexpressed, remains buried in a mysterious brew of nameless realities. While she walks in her sleep, she not only tries to rub the imaginary bloodstains from her hands; she writes and reads as well. As a gentleman says,

. . . I have seen her rise from her bed, throw her night-gown upon her, unlock her closet, take forth paper, fold it, write upon’t, read it, afterwards seal it, and again return to bed; yet all this while in a most fast sleep. (V.i.4–8)

What else could she be doing but writing her confession and then reading it to herself? The mechanical tone of the passage suggests that, despite her advice to the contrary, she too is moved by a deep and natural desire to name the deeds she has done. The first Thane of Cawdor, as Malcolm says, “very frankly . . . confess’d his treasons” and “set forth / A deep repentance,” and this confession, this articulation of the names of his crimes, allowed him to die in peace: “Nothing in his life, / Became him,” says Malcolm, “like the leaving it” (I.iv.5–8). Lady Macbeth’s refusal to confess, even to herself, is of course the cause of her madness, of the “thick-coming fancies, / That keep her from her rest” (V.iii.38–39). And nothing becomes her less than the torture she endures and the hideous, inarticulate scream with which she leaves the world. When he asks the doctor to tend to the wretch, Macbeth seems to accept the idea that the self is essentially verbal, yet he continues to believe that its ailments may be palliated from without:

Canst thou not minister to a mind diseas’d,
Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow,
Raze out the written troubles of the brain,
And with some sweet oblivious antidote
Cleanse the stuff’d bosom of that perilous stuff
Which weighs upon the heart? (V.iii.40–45)

By “perilous stuff,” of course, he means the names of her crimes and, by implication, of his own as well. “Therein,” says the doctor, “the patient / Must minister to himself” (V.iii.45–46). The great difference between Macbeth and his wife, indeed the very cause of their estrangement, is that Macbeth, however reluctantly and imperfectly, is compelled to heed the doctor’s advice, even before it is given.

Much of this play is precisely about how Macbeth tries to minister to himself. His description of what happened in Duncan's sleeping chamber is an attempt to unburden himself of the "perilous stuff" within him. After the murder, one of the chamberlains muttered, "God bless us!" in his sleep, and Macbeth tried to respond with "Amen," but could not: "I had most need of blessing," he says, "and 'Amen' / Stuck in my throat" (II.ii.24–30). No longer worthy of God's blessing, Macbeth was unable to utter the word that might invoke it. It is a fitting punishment for one who has sought the truth not from within but from without, from the mouths, that is, of those "secret, black, and midnight hags" (IV.i.48), who, when he meets them the second time, are engaged in one of the most poetic acts of naming in the entire play (IV.i.22–38). To recite the names of the ingredients of their brew is to enchant them, to organize and control them, so that they may be placed in the service of those who do the naming. And what these witches do may be taken as a metaphor for what so many of the other characters in this play do. It is what the first Cawdor does when he writes his confession. It is what Malcolm and Macduff do in England. And it is what Macbeth must eventually do as well, although of course he will do it imperfectly and too late. When he asks the witches, "What is't you do?" their reply is, "A deed without a name" (IV.i.49). This seems to be a subtle and sarcastic reminder, confirmed by the appearance of the ghosts of his victims, that he must find a way — not here but in the community of his fellows — to name the unspeakable crimes he has committed. Those crimes, along with all of his virtuous deeds as well, are like the witches' brew. If there is witchcraft in *Macbeth*, therefore, it is only the witchcraft of human self-discovery.³¹

Whether Macbeth knows it or not, listening to the witches as they mix their brew is a lesson for him, just as listening to Malcolm is a lesson for Macduff. Shortly before his fatal conflict with Macduff, Macbeth, now "sick at heart" (V.iii.19), engages in an act of naming of a kind that by now should be familiar, only in this case it is profoundly saddening:

I have liv'd long enough: my way of life
Is fall'n into the sear, the yellow leaf,
And that which should accompany old age,
As honor, love, obedience, troops of friends,
I must not look to have; but in their stead,
Curses, not loud but deep, mouth-honor, breath,
Which the poor heart would fain deny, and dare not. (V.iii.22–28)

The catalogue fashion of this passage recalls the recitations, or assertions, of Malcolm and the witches. Macbeth's old habit of indirection, of resorting to pronouns when speaking about himself, seems quite gone.

Does his second encounter with the witches, then, prepare him to give voice to what he has allowed himself to become? "What is thy name?" asks young Siward when he confronts Macbeth in battle. The reply is not King, nor Thane of Cawdor, nor even Thane of Glamis; it is simply, "My name's Macbeth." And Young Siward's response could not be more thematically integral: "The devil himself could not pronounce a title / More hateful to mine ear" (V.vii.5–9). The Macbeth who slays young Siward might recall the soldier at the beginning of the play, who well deserved the name "brave Macbeth," for Macbeth is once again, and for the last time, on the battlefield that he knows so well. The difference, however, is that now he brings to this battlefield an awareness of a more complicated world and of his failure to perform adequately in it; and this awareness makes a return to innocence — a return to action unimpeded by self-knowledge — impossible. This battlefield, moreover, is itself more complicated, for on it now are soldiers whose actions can actually be inspired by self-knowledge, soldiers like Macduff, who is capable, after his "noble passion," of knowing when it is time to stop looking within and to act instead. The way he addresses Macbeth, just before their fight, is significant: "I have no words, / My voice is in my sword, thou bloodier villain / Than terms can give thee out!" (V.viii.6–8). Macbeth, however, is in a weakened state; his voice cannot be in his sword, as he refuses to call himself by his proper name. He would like it still to be Macbeth, but in fact, as Macduff has told him, it is now more appropriately "the tyrant" or "monster."

In the end, Malcolm says to his men, "My thanes and kinsmen, / Henceforth be earls, the first that ever Scotland / In such an honor nam'd" (V.ix.28–30). It is an act of naming that recalls the moment when Rosse pronounces Macbeth Thane of Cawdor, or when Duncan pronounces Malcolm Prince of Cumberland. And the play's concluding word, "Scone," recalls the most illegitimate act of naming in the entire play, Macbeth's coronation: "He is already nam'd," says Macduff, "and gone to Scone / To be invested" (II.iv.31–32). The end of this play is a reminder, then, that this compulsion to name and thereby to control the things of this world — of the world without and the world within — can be creative or destructive; that it is neither good nor bad, only unavoidable, and will endure as long as human integrity depends on one's ability to shape oneself, or as Macbeth puts it: till "to-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow," till "the last syllable of recorded time" (V.v.19, 21). Put to the right purposes, however, the act of naming does seem to be redeeming. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Theseus defines the work of the poet, whose eye,

. . . in a fine frenzy rolling,
 Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;
 And as imagination bodies forth
 The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
 Turns them to shapes, and gives to aery nothing
 A local habitation and a name. (V.i.12–17)

This “fine frenzy” is something that the dynamic characters of *Macbeth* come to know quite well. Malcolm calls it a “noble passion.” Through it, he and Macduff come to understand that language, even unpoetic language, offers a certain measure of control over a world that otherwise would be chaotic and menacing. They survive because they accept an important and paradoxical reality: that one can arrive at self-knowledge only through language but that language is inescapably communal; that what one says, even about oneself, can be illuminating, even creative, only after it has involved others and elicited a response from them.

And this is what Macbeth, who would be his very own maker if he could, never quite understands. He wants the witches to be simple repositories, like the scabbard that holds his sword, holding prefabricated knowledge that is there for the taking and not subject to interpretation. He wishes that the mind, too, were a mere container, so that a doctor might simply reach in and erase one's troubles. He knows that the modern world in which he finds himself is fundamentally verbal, but he wants to work his way through it in the old way, using its new implement, language, like the old implement. Without dialogue, however, without the community's response to the spoken word, language eventually deteriorates. This, ultimately, is the failure that reduces all speech for Macbeth to sound and fury. What redeems the play, of course, is the fact that in the reader or member of the audience, Macbeth will always have a listener. In the end it is to this listener that Macbeth recounts, and recounts so well, the experience of his dissolution: his alienation from the community of speakers and listeners. “Most people will agree,” says Pratt, “that this kind of verbal rendering and display of experience is a fundamentally human activity, one that is crucial to our well-being in the world and that affords us endless pleasure.”³² She is writing here not about literature but about natural narratives, the kinds of stories that people tell each other every day. This basic human truth, it seems to me, applies equally well to *Macbeth*.

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Notes

1. Elmer Edgar Stoll, "Source and Motive in *Macbeth* and *Othello*," in *From Shakespeare to Joyce* (1944); rpt. *Shakespeare: Modern Essays in Criticism*, ed. Leonard F. Dean (London: Oxford University Press, 1957), p. 319.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*, p. 326.
4. All references to Shakespeare will be to *The Riverside Shakespeare*, G. Blakemore Evans and J. J. M. Tobin, gen. eds., 2nd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997).
5. David Young, *The Action to the Word: Structure and Style in Shakespearean Tragedy* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990), p. 128. Young does not pursue this thought, as his aim is rather to examine the relationship between the play's language in general and its action. Most studies of naming in Shakespeare have been limited by their focus on titles and proper names. Three general studies are by Marvin Spevack, "Beyond Individualism: Names and Namelessness in Shakespeare," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 56 (1993): 383–98; Manfred Weidhorn, "The Relation of Title and Name to Identity in Shakespearean Tragedy," *Studies in English Literature* 9 (1969): 303–19; and G. Wilson Knight, "What's in a Name?" in *The Sovereign Flower: On Shakespeare as the Poet of Royalism, together with Related Essays, etc.* (New York: Macmillan, 1958), pp. 163–201. Weidhorn is mainly concerned with *Antony and Cleopatra*, *King Lear*, *Coriolanus* and *Hamlet*. For a more particular study, see R. A. Foakes, "An Approach to *Julius Caesar*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 5 (1954): 259–70. Perhaps because the question of naming is so urgent in *Coriolanus* and in *Romeo and Juliet*, these plays have inspired several probing studies of the subject, two of them recent. See Burton Hatlen, "The 'Noble Thing' and the 'Boy of Tears': *Coriolanus* and the Embarrassments of Identity," *English Literary Renaissance* 27 (1997): 393–420, and David Lucking, "'The price of one fair word': Negotiating Names in *Coriolanus*," *Early Modern Literary Studies* 2.1 (1996): <http://www.shu.ac.uk/emls/02-1/luck-shak.html> (latest access 11 November 2002); see also Lucking's brilliant article, "That Which We Call a Name: The Balcony Scene in *Romeo and Juliet*," *English* 44 (1995), pp. 1–16. An important earlier study is D. J. Gordon's "Name and Fame: Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*," in *Papers: Mainly Shakespearean*, ed. G. I. Duthie (Aberdeen: Oliver and Boyd for the University of Aberdeen, 1964), pp. 40–57.
6. What Molly M. Mahood has said about a closely related subject applies here as well: "The wordplay of *Macbeth*, less obvious than that of other plays, is some of the most subtle Shakespeare has given us. It welds the themes of the play together into the imaginative unity of a great dramatic poem. At the same time it preserves the play's theatrical vigour by contributing to the interplay of characters as fully realised as any in the major group of Shakespeare's tragedies" (*Shakespeare's Wordplay* [London: Methuen, 1957], p. 145).
7. For a full discussion of this topic see R. Willson, Jr., "Fearful Punning: The Name Game in *Macbeth*," *Cahiers Élisabéthains* 15 (1979): 29–34.
8. J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962), p. 8.
9. Mary Louise Pratt, *Toward a Speech Act Theory of Literary Discourse* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977), p. 134. By "appropriate" Pratt means that the speech act in question takes place under a set of conditions deemed necessary by the commu-

nity in which it is uttered. This usage respects that which was established by Austin (pp. 8–9).

10. Pratt, p. 136.
11. As Austin discovered, by the time he gave the last of his Harvard lectures, the distinction between performatives and “locutionary” or “constative” — or merely representational — utterances is difficult to maintain, and indeed all utterances are to some degree performative: “Our subsequent discussion of doing and saying certainly seems to point to the conclusion that when I ‘say’ anything (except perhaps a mere exclamation like ‘damn’ or ‘ouch’) I shall be performing both locutionary and illocutionary acts, and these two kinds of acts seem to be the very things which we tried to use as a means of distinguishing, under the names of ‘doing’ and ‘saying,’ performatives from constatives” (p. 132).
12. See Arnold Stein, “Macbeth and Word-Magic,” *Sewanee Review* 59 (1951): 271–84. Stein limits himself to Macbeth and the witches and fails to see that this concern permeates the play. George Walton Williams, perhaps sensing in *Macbeth* Shakespeare’s insistent preoccupation with naming, acknowledges the play’s unusual dependence on language itself (“‘Time for Such a Word’: Verbal Echoing in *Macbeth*,” *Shakespeare Survey* 47 [1994]: 153–59).
13. Jane Donawerth, *Shakespeare and the Sixteenth-Century Study of Language* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984), p. 3. One might also, along with Stephen Greenblatt, call this self-fashioning. See his *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980). But because this is an intensely verbal affair, one is better served here by the work of scholars whose main interest is the relationship between identity and language.
14. In Shakespeare, says Donawerth, there is no commitment to the magical influence of words on people, and *Macbeth* “requires neither belief nor skepticism for the witches’ claims, but rather the ability to entertain both possibilities” (pp. 41–42).
15. Macbeth, says Young, “is unusually self-aware from the very beginning, alert to the power of mental realities and sensitive, even though he is walking away from an extremely bloody battle, to the horror of the murder he is drawn to contemplate” (p. 111). Such a sensibility makes mere listening dangerous, for mental realities, as represented by language, threaten always to become physical realities, especially in a world like Macbeth’s, where it is often difficult to tell the difference between word and deed, where word and deed, says Young, form “a magical partnership like that of the weird sisters” (p. 100). This subject has recently inspired a novel by Javier Marías, one of Spain’s most gifted writers:

Listening is the most dangerous thing of all, listening means knowing, finding out about something and knowing what’s going on, our ears don’t have lids that can instinctively close against the words uttered, they can’t hide from what they sense they’re about to hear, it’s always too late.

So says the narrator of *A Heart So White*, trans. Margaret Jull Costa (London: The Harvill Press, 1995), p. 69, in a chapter dedicated entirely to *Macbeth*.

16. From the witches to the porter, equivocation forms a related thematic concern. Garry Wills has examined it, with regard to the Jesuitical tradition, in *Witches and Jesuits: Shakespeare’s Macbeth* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press and The New York Public Library, 1995). See also the following studies: William O. Scott, “Macbeth’s — And Our — Self-Equivocations,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 37 (1986): 160–74;

Steven Mullaney, "Lying Like Truth: Riddle, Representation and Treason in Renaissance England," *ELH* 47 (1980): 32–47; G. I. Duthie, "Antithesis in *Macbeth*," *Shakespeare Survey* 19 (1966): 25–33; and Frank Huntley, "*Macbeth* and the Background of Jesuitical Equivocation," *PMLA* 79 (1964): 390–400.

17. Michel Eyquem de Montaigne, *Montaigne's Essays*, trans. John Florio, 3 vols., Everyman's Library (London: Dent; New York: Dutton, 1910), 2: 394.
18. Derek A. Traversi. *An Approach to Shakespeare*, 2nd ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1956), pp. 176–77.
19. L. C. Knights, "From 'How Many Children Had Lady Macbeth?'" in *Macbeth: Critical Essays*, ed. S. Schoenbaum (New York: Garland, 1991), pp. 140–41 (rpt. from *Explorations* [New York: New York University Press, 1964]).
20. Pratt, p. 222.
21. Wills sees this passage as a "reverse spell"; indeed everything that Malcolm says in this scene is a kind of benevolent conjuration, meant to purge and strengthen Macduff. "Malcolm," he says, "only takes his proper station in the play if we see him as the great counter-witch pitted against Macbeth." Wills laments the "wimp or milksop Malcolm so often seen on the stage" (p. 124), but seeing him as a "great counter-witch," vastly superior to Macduff, would make him as inhuman as Traversi or Knights would have him. Similarities to the conjurations of the witches are certainly there; what Wills misses is that Malcolm is himself purged and strengthened by his conjurations.

Young's analysis of this "strange little scene" is similar to my own but, in my view, not quite the same:

The key difference between Macbeth and Malcolm seems to be that the one cannot encounter the disposition to evil within himself without an accompanying compulsion to act it out, while the other can put it into words, which are retractable and, in this case, harmless. Malcolm will presumably be less corruptible in power because he can contemplate his own potential for sin, articulate it to himself and others, and then draw back from it. The word-deed distinction, crucial to reasonable human behavior, will be restored under his regime. Language will be less magical, behavior less compulsive. (p. 128)

As I have tried to show, Malcolm is not completely formed when he first appears in this scene; he is still in the process of becoming and therefore quite dynamic. Also, as I have suggested, the evil that Malcolm discovers within himself cannot be erased. His retraction is not really a retraction; it is only a second act of discovery, one that invokes virtuous qualities that might subdue, but never eliminate, their opposites.

22. Pratt, p. 140.
23. Donawerth, pp. 97–98.
24. Young, p. 127.
25. Donawerth's observations on *Hamlet* are illuminating here. She cites the passage in which a messenger expresses his contempt for the presumption of the masses:

The rabble call him lord,
And as the world were now but to begin,
Antiquity forgot, custom not known,
The ratifiers and props of every word,
They cry, "Choose we, Laertes shall be king!" (IV.v.103–7)

"Most Elizabethans with an opinion on it," says Donawerth, "saw language as an invention, and one dependent on an entire society, not just on an individual." The rabble here behave as if they were the very first members of their society, so that "they think," says Donawerth, "that they can bestow names where they will." It is a chaos begun, of course, by Claudius: "When any man can appoint a king, there can be no true king; when any man can invent his own meaning for words, words also lose their validity" (pp. 32–33). In *Hamlet*, the name king has lost its validity; in *Macbeth*, all names are at risk of losing their validity, of being reduced to "sound and fury" (V.v.27).

26. "There's no art / To find the mind's construction in the face" (I.iv.11–12), he says of the first Cawdor.
27. John Searle, *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1969), p. 172.
28. Gordon, p. 54.
29. Spevack, who does not discuss *Macbeth* at any length, says, however, that Shakespeare "was obsessed with names," that he saw them strictly as threats to freedom and was forever dramatizing the struggle against this threat. It is a struggle that "involves a denial of self and of name, of family and of state, of structures and boundaries." The thesis, although restricted to proper names, is nevertheless provocative, yielding the conclusion that "the freedom of namelessness, of boundaries, is an alternative to the individualism normally associated with the Renaissance," that what one is witnessing is individualism "in the process of being deconstructed," and that, "paradoxically, the loss of identity is the condition for self-fulfillment" (pp. 386–94). Hatlen perhaps would disagree; in his discussion of *Coriolanus* he makes the interesting point that names do not name identities; rather, they name "relationships" between the individual and the world, which are nothing more than collections of "social and familial and linguistic systems." All individuals are inextricably bound to that world; indeed, one's "possibilities of existence" are defined by it and all names must come from it. "The self," he says, "exists only as a shifting point within a network of relationships" (pp. 411–19).
30. Also of interest here is Macbeth's use of the word "assassination" (I.vii.2), which occurs nowhere else in Shakespeare. As Anthony Gilbert has noted, "the rare word is abstract and neutral in tone, and almost a euphemism to disguise the horror of the brutal act itself" ("Shakespearean Self-Talk, the Gricean Maxims and the Unconscious," *English Studies* 76 [1995]: 231).
31. One is reminded here of Othello, who is accused of witchcraft. After recounting his story in a long and deeply poetic monologue, the beauty of which gives one an idea of why Brabantio had made him repeat it so often and how Desdemona was seduced, Othello admits, with much irony, "This only is the witchcraft I have us'd" (I.iii.169).
32. Pratt, p. 140.