Greg 1955 W. W. Greg, The Shakespeare first folio -- its bibliographical and textual history (Oxford, 1955).

389

XXIX. *MACBETH.* 1606

Folio. -- Macbeth, with 2,108 lines, is one of the shortest plays in the canon, and much the shortest of the Tragedies./1 It has 28 scenes,/2 with an average of barely more than 75 lines. This multiplicity of scenes must be a deliberate dramatic device to give an impression of rapid and bustling action, as in *Antony and Cleopatra*;/3 but whether the briefness of the scenes, the longest of which is 240 lines, is due to the play having been originally written as a short piece, perhaps to form part of a court entertainment, or whether it is mainly or wholly the result of adaptation for such an occasion, is less clear. Belonging most likely to 1606 and being obviously designed to flatter King James,/4 it is only natural to suspect -- though there is no evidence to support the suspicion -- that *Macbeth* may have been one of the three plays presented by the King's men at Greenwich and Hampton Court in July and August as part of James's entertainment of his brother-in-law Christian IV of Denmark, an occasion on which a short play may have been acceptable. On the other hand it is almost certain that the text as we have it has undergone at least some cutting. It has, for instance, many short lines; and while some of these may be, and probably are, original, others, either by their own awkwardness or by concomitant obscurity, suggest interference with the text, as for example at I. ii. 20, 51, III. ii. 32, iv. 4, IV. iii. 28, 44. There are also some inconsistencies in the action which suggest that we have not got the whole story. One concerns Cawdor's treachery. At I. ii. 50 Ross reports that

> Norway himselfe, with terrible numbers,
> Assisted by that most disloyall Traytor,
> The Thane of Cawdor, began a dismall Conflict,

/1 Only *The Comedy of Errors*, 1,777 lines, and *The Tempest*, 2,062 lines are shorter. *Julius Caesar*, 2,477 lines, is the only other Tragedy with less than 3,000.

/2 In the Globe edition, but see pp. 395-6.

/3 A play of 3,064 lines and 43 scenes, giving an average of no more than 73 lines, in spite of a fifth act of two scenes only, one of which runs to 369 lines. The shortest scenes in *Macbeth* have 12 and 10 lines: *Antony and Cleopatra* has two scenes of 4 lines only.

/4 See Note A on p. 396.

390

yet at I. iii. 72 Macbeth, fresh from the battle, knows nothing of Cawdor's defection: 'the Thane of Cawdor liues A prosperous Gentleman'. It is evident that the understanding between Cawdor and Norway was a secret one and had only come

to light after Macbeth left the field, and presumably some explanation of the circumstances has been lost./5 There seems also to have been some alteration in the staging of the final battle at Dunsinane and the presentation of Macbeth's death./6 In these cases, it is true, the cutting or revision may not have been extensive. More serious are the contradictions that appear to gather round the plot to kill Duncan. In the lines that begin 'What Beast was't then That made you breake this enterprize to me?' (I. vii. 47-54) Lady Macbeth clearly implies that it was her husband who first suggested the murder: yet the first we hear of it is in I. v, where the plot is clearly the Lady's, and as the play now stands no earlier consultation was possible./7 Moreover, in I. v it is clearly Lady Macbeth who proposes to do the killing,/8 and this is borne out by her subsequent excuse (II. ii. 12-13) 'Had he not resembled My Father as he slept, I had don't': yet it appears from Macbeth's soliloquy while he is waiting for her signal (II. i. 33-64) that responsibility for the actual deed is to be his own. There has clearly been some change of purpose, and perhaps even of presentation, here; but how far the original plan was developed and subsequently modified, and how far Shakespeare was content to play the dramatic game of hinting at a background of plotting that he never troubled to work out, is more difficult to determine. Whatever we may suspect, there is no proof that *Macbeth* was ever anything but a short play./9

It has often been suspected that *Macbeth* suffers from interpolation as well as cutting. There are two songs in the later witch-scenes of which only the opening words are given: III. v. 33 'Come away, come away, &c.' and IV. i. 43 'Blacke

/5 See Note B on p. 396. /6 See p. 394. /8 See Note C on p. 396.

/8 That she bids her husband 'put This Nights great Businesse into my dispatch' (ll. 68-69) and 'Leaue all the rest to me' (l. 74) might mean no more than that she undertook to make the necessary preparations -- as she in fact did in the drugging of the guards -- but her prayer 'That my keene Knife see not the Wound it makes' (l. 53) proves that it was her own hand that was to wield the weapon.

/9 See Note D on p. 397.

Spirites, &c.' Songs beginning thus are preserved in a play by Thomas Middleton called *The Witch*, which has come down to us in manuscript, where they appear to be original./10 When he wrote his play Middleton knew and echoed *Macbeth*: in view of the borrowing of the songs it is not unlikely that *Macbeth* may be reciprocally indebted to Middleton in other ways as well. Chambers, who is followed by Wilson, maintains that 'interpolation' is 'confined to three passages in the witch-scenes' (namely III. v and IV. i. 39-43 and 125-32), 'which can be distinguished from the genuine text by the introduction of Hecate, by the use of an iambic instead of a trochaic metre, and by prettinesses of lyrical fancy alien to the main conception of the witches'. The change of tone

is evident: whether it implies a difference of authorship each reader must judge for himself./11 Wilson, who suspects, though he does not claim, that Middleton's insertions may be more extensive than Chambers allows, believes that they necessitated abbreviation elsewhere in order to maintain the balance of *Macbeth* as a short play, and makes Middleton responsible for the clumsy cutting of the doubtless originally Shakespearian second scene, which has left it in what is generally admitted to be its present unsatisfactory state. The speech of the 'bleeding Captaine'/12 especially is rough in metre and has several short lines, which F and modern editions dispose somewhat differently. He is, of course, wounded and complains of faintness at the end, but there is nothing in the character of his deliberately rhetorical speech/13 to lead one to suppose that its occasional incoherence is due

/10 Malone MS. 12 in the Bodleian, a scribal copy by Ralph Crane. The latest edition is that for the Malone Society, 1950, in which the songs will be found at ll. 1331 and 1999. There is no doubt that these are the songs intended, for versions of them were included, doubtless from some stage source, in Davenant's adaptation of *Macbeth* in 1672-3 (printed 1674) and thence no doubt in the 1673 quarto of Shakespeare's play.

/11 See Note E on p. 397. /12 See Note F on p. 397.

/13 Wilson finds a similarity of style between it and the 'Pyrrhus' speech in *Hamlet*, and points out that l. 22, 'Till he vnseam'd him from the Naue toth' Chops', and *Hamlet*, II. ii. 495-6, 'But with the whiffe and winde of his fell sword, Th'vnnerued father fals', derive from consecutive lines in the Marlowe-Nashe *Dido* (II. i. 253-6):

> Which he disdaining whiskt his sword about,
> And with the wound [*conj.* wind] thereof the King fell downe:
> Then from the nauell to the throat at once,
> He ript old Priam ...

to the speaker's condition rather than to textual accidents. Moreover, similar irregularities occur throughout the scene.

The date of Middleton's *Witch* is uncertain. If, as seems to be implied in the manuscript, it was first acted at the Blackfriars house, it cannot be earlier than 1609; and if, as some suppose, it made use of the witches from the anti-masque of Jonson's *Masque of Queens*, it is unlikely to be much later: 1610-11 is as probable a date as any. The only recorded performance of *Macbeth* was that witnessed by Simon Forman at the Globe on Saturday 20 April 1611 (not 1610 as he wrote in error) but from his confused account it is, of course, impossible to tell exactly what version was then on the boards. One would imagine that a performance at the Globe would be of a full-length play. But if a short play was desired as part of a court entertainment, the company may well have been tempted to revive *Macbeth* and to salvage some of the witch-spectacle from Middleton's unsuccessful piece./14 An occasion of the sort may have presented itself at the time of the marriage of Princess Elizabeth to the Elector Palatine on 14 February 1613./15 By then Shakespeare had

retired from the stage and revision of the work by another hand would have been more likely than earlier.

The stage-directions show evidence of more than one origin and hint at occasional confusion or alteration: I. i. 1 'Thunder and Lightning. Enter three Witches'; ii. 1 'Alarum within. Enter King[,] Malcolme, Donalbaine, Lenox, with attendants, meeting a bleeding Captaine'; iii. 21 'Drum within'; 78 'Witches vanish'; iv. 1 'Flourish. Enter King...'; 58 'Flourish. | Exeunt'; v. 1 'Enter Macbeths Wife alone with a Letter'; vi. 1 'Hoboyes, and Torches. Enter King...'; vii. 1 'Ho-boyes. | Torches. | Enter a Sewer, and diuers Seruants with Dishes and Seruice ouer the Stage. Then enter Macbeth'; II. i. 1 'Enter Banquo, and Fleance, with a Torch

/14 Compare *Macbeth*, IV. i. 132, 'Musicke. | The Witches Dance, and vanish', with *The Witch*, l. 2022, 'here they Daunce y/e witches Dance & Ex/t.'

/15 The King's men presented an unidentified play at Whitehall on 16 Feb., which was either in addition to or in place of a masque, but this is likely to have been one of the fourteen named pieces performed in connexion with the wedding festivities for which they were paid by warrant of 10 May following (Chambers, *Eliz. Stage*, iv. 127, *W. Shake.*, ii. 342-3).

before him'; 9 'Enter Macbeth, and a Seruant with a Torch'; 61 'A Bell rings'; ii. 57 'Knocke within' (and 'Knocke' at 65, 69, 73); iii. 1. 'Enter a Porter. | Knocking within' (and Knocke' at 3, 7, 13, 17, 22); 85 'Ring the Bell. [printed as part of the text] | Bell rings. Enter Lady'; iv. 1 'Enter Rosse, with an Old man'; III. i. 11 'Senit sounded. Enter Macbeth as King, Lady[,] Lenox, Rosse, Lords, and Attendants'; 44 'Exeunt Lords'; 73 'Enter Seruant, and two Murtherers',<> iii. 1 'Enter three Murtherers'; iv. 1 'Banquet prepar'd. Enter Macbeth ...'; 40 'Enter the Ghost of Banquo, and sits in Macbeths place'; v. 1 'Thunder. Enter the three Witches, meeting Hecat'; vi. 1 'Enter Lenox, and another Lord'; IV. i. 1 'Thunder. Enter the three Witches'; 39 'Enter Hecat, and the other three Witches'; 69 Thunder | 1. Apparition, an Armed Head'; 72 'He Descends'; 76 'Thun-der. | 2 Apparition, a Bloody Childe'; 81 'Descends'; 86 'Thunder[.] | 3 Apparition, a Childe Crowned, with a Tree in his hand'; 94 'Descends'; 116 'Hoboyes'; 112 'A shew of eight Kings, and Banquo last, with a glasse in his hand';/16 ii. 85 'Exit crying Murther'; iii. 140 'Enter a Doctor'; V. i. 1 'Enter a [different] Doctor of Physicke, and a Wayting Gentle-woman'; 22 'Enter Lady, with a Taper'; ii. 1 'Drum and Colours. Enter ...'; 31 'Exeunt marching'; iv. 1 'Drum and Colours. Enter Malcolme ... and Soldiers Marching'; 21 'Exeunt marching'; v. 1 'Enter Macbeth, Seyton, & Souldiers, with Drum and Colours'; 7 'A Cry within of Women'; vi. 1 'Drum and Colours. | Enter ... and their Army, with Boughes'; 10 'Exeunt[.] | Alarums continued'; vii. 11 'Fight, and young Seyward slaine'; viii. 34 'Exeunt fighting. Alarums. | Enter Fighting, and Macbeth slaine. |

Retreat, and Flourish. Enter with Drumme and Colours...'; 54 'Enter Macduffe; with Macbeths head'; 59 'Flourish'; 75 'Flourish. | Exeunt Omnes'.

There are plenty of descriptive touches here to suggest the author: 'meeting a bleeding Captaine', 'alone with a letter, 'diuers Seruants with Dishes and Seruice ouer the Stage', 'Banquet prepar'd', 'A Cry within of Women', 'their Army, with Boughes'; and some rather vague descriptions:

/16 This is in error: it is the last of the kings, not Banquo, who carries the mirror, as appears from l. 119. But it may be only the punctuation that is at fault.

'Rosse, with an Old man', 'Lenox, and another Lord', 'a Doctor of Physicke, and a Wayting Gentlewoman', 'Exeunt [*or* Exit] Lords'. But the ample provision of lights and noises points to the hand of the book-keeper: 'Senit sounded', 'Ho-boyes. Torches', 'Drum and Colours'; and so does the careful specification of Attendants. There is a duplication at II. iii. 85 that is clearly his; 'Ring the Bell' being an executive order for the author's 'Bell rings'. Duplication in the battle scene points to a change in the staging: at V. viii. 34 'Exeunt fighting' is consistent with 54 'Enter Macduffe; with Macbeths head', but hardly with the intervening 'Enter Fighting, and Macbeth slaine'. Apparently it was decided that a display of swordsmanship was desirable and that Macbeth's death should take place on the stage, and the directions were inadequately adjusted./17 There is an error at I. vi. 1, where 'Hoboyes, and Torches' has been attached to the head of the wrong scene: it is repeated correctly at the beginning of I. vii./18

The author's directions derive doubtless from his foul papers, but there is nothing in them that might not reasonably survive in a prompt-book, though a few might have been made more specific. Contrariwise, the book-keeper's additions might for the most part be notes made on the foul papers, though they are rather more elaborate than one would expect;/19 but the duplication at II. iii. 85 looks more like a note made in the prompt-book, and if there was a change in the staging of the battle-scene, it was more likely made when the play was at least in rehearsal, and the record would naturally find its way into the prompt-book and not into

/17 Of course the directions will not do as they stand. In spite of what Wilson says, it would be pointless for the combatants to go off fighting and immediately return to conclude the battle. The Elizabethan producer had to be wary of the 'brawle ridiculous'.

/18 Editors have long recognized that 'Torches' are inappropriate in 'the one sunlit scene in the play'. (The suggestion that they point to an indoor performance at the Blackfriars or elsewhere is manifestly absurd.) But so are the 'Hoboyes'. Duncan is not making a ceremonial entry but approaching the castle informally, as the casual conversation indicates. Lady Macbeth catches sight of him and hastens out at l. 10. A formal entry would call for a flourish of trumpets: oboes are indoor instruments, appropriate accompaniment to the banquet.

/19 The misplacing of the torches and music at I. vi. 1 would perhaps happen more easily in annotating foul papers than in preparing the prompt-copy, and in a play so full of lights and noises the direction might easily be copied in thoughtlessly.

the foul papers. Chambers states that '*Macbeth* is doubtless printed from a prompt-copy', and this too is Wilson's opinion, though he adds that if there was much abridgement it may have involved a transcript of the stage-copy, and that this may account for a good deal of mislining in the earlier part of the play./20

That behind F there lies a prompt-book of some sort is placed beyond reasonable doubt by two further considerations. One is that the record of entrances and exits is almost complete, such deficiencies as there are being, if necessary, attributable to scribe and compositor./21 The other is that there is practically no inconsistency, much less ambiguity, in the designation of the characters./22 It is difficult to believe that any text printed from Shakespeare's foul papers could show such regularity.

One cannot help wondering why copy such as that behind *Macbeth* should have been chosen for the Folio -- always supposing that something fuller once existed and had survived. But at the time the Folio was printed James was still on the throne, and for a play so essentially his the editors may have thought it good policy to print a version prepared for court presentation. It may be that to this bit of snobbery we owe the loss of the authentic text.

The play is divided into acts and scenes and it is likely that these were already marked in the manuscript used to print from. Everything is regular except in the last act, in which the battle-scene is confused. F makes this continuous

/20 One author-spelling survives at I. ii. 34, 'Banquoh' (Holinshed 'Banquho'): see p. 147. But that might happen even in a transcript.

/21 At II. i. 30 there should be an exit for Fleance as well as Banquo. There should be exits for the Ghost at III. iv. 72 and 107, and for a Servant at V. iii. 19. At IV. i. 132 Hecate must be included in the Witches' exit. There should be an exit and re-entry for Seyton at V. v. 8 and 15, but such brief absences, implied in the text, are often not marked any more than other obvious 'business'. At V. iv. 1 modern editors add Lennox and Ross, but their presence is not necessary. On the other hand some omit Angus at I. ii. 45, since he is mute, but, as Wilson points out, I. iii. 100 seems to make his presence likely.

/22 Duncan is invariably 'King' both in directions and speech-headings. Macbeth appears 'as King' at III. i. 11 but is never called so, nor is Lady Macbeth ever Queene. (This is the more striking in that Macbeth had a claim to the throne through his wife. But Shakespeare deliberately refuses to allow any excuse for the usurper.) She is introduced as 'Macbeths Wife' (I. v. 1) and at III. ii. 1 is 'Macbeths Lady': otherwise she is simply 'Lady' throughout. The only irregularity is the Captain-Sergeant confusion already mentioned (Note F).

(sc. vii): modern editors, following Pope, begin a fresh scene (viii) after l. 29. But there is no necessary change of locality,

and the stage is equally clear before vii. 14 and 24 and viii. 35, and at this last point Wilson (again following Pope) actually proposes another new scene (ix).

NOTE A (page 389)

The Weird Sisters are, of course, in Holinshed, who has a picture of them, but it is worth recording that during James's visit to Oxford, on 27 Aug. 1605, he was greeted by 'tres quasi Sibyllae' with speeches alluding to Duncan and Banquo, which were printed at the end of Matthew Gwynne's *Vertumnus* in 1607. In the Folio they are called Witches in the directions: in the text they are always the Weird Sisters (except to the 'rumpe-fed Ronyon' of I. iii. 6). The word is spelt 'weyward' or 'weyard' in F and is usually two syllables: in Holinshed it is 'weird'. They bear with them a distant suggestion of the Parcae, but it would be too much to call them ministers of fate.

NOTE B : (page 390)

The secret nature of Cawdor's treason is later made quite plain, and it is clear that the discovery, however it was made, came as a shock and a surprise (see I. ii. 65–66, iii. 111–16, iv. 5, 11–14). But these belated allusions do not obliterate the earlier contradiction. However, Ross's speech in I. ii is itself plainly defective. In F ll. 50 ff. run:

> . . . And fanne our people cold.
> Norway himselfe, with terrible numbers,
> Assisted by that most disloyall Traytor,

The Globe edition, for the sake of the metre, prints:

> . . . And fan our people cold. Norway himself,
> With terrible numbers,
> Assisted by that most disloyal traitor,

All would be well if we were to complete the clumsy half-line with some such words as 'and, as now is known,' or 'and in secrecy.' But the defect is probably more considerable.

NOTE C (page 390)

That Macbeth was already meditating murder and shrinking from the act is true. His hesitation between passively awaiting the fulfilment of the Witches' prophecy and actively promoting it is the theme of I. iii. 130–42, and I. iv. 49–53 show him embracing the latter course. It is also true that he hints at his ambition in his letter to his wife, I. v. 1–15 -- 'what Greatnesse is promis'd thee. Lay it to thy heart' -- but the only unequivocal phrases -- 'the fatall entrance of Duncan Vnder my Battlements', 'O neuer, Shall Sunne that Morrow see', 'He that's comming, Must be prouided for' -- are the Lady's: Macbeth says no more than 'We will speake further'. None of this would justify Lady Macbeth's words 'Nor time, nor place Did then adhere, and yet

you would make both' (I. vii. 51–52). As soon as Duncan decided to visit Macbeth time and place did adhere, and his coming is announced in I. v.

NOTE D (page 390)

The difficulties of the extant text are well analysed by Dover Wilson in the introduction to his edition of 1947. Naturally he builds round them an elaborate textual history. *Macbeth*, as a full-length play, was originally written by Shakespeare for James VI in 1599, at a time when one Lawrence Fletcher was leading a section of the Chamberlain's men on a tour in Scotland; later it was abridged by the author for the entertainment of Christian IV in 1606; and again in 1610-11 interpolated, with compensatory cutting, by Middleton. It may be remarked that though Fletcher's name heads the list in the patent of the King's men in 1603, there is no evidence that he was ever associated with the Chamberlain's, or that any members of the company were ever in Scotland.

NOTE E (page 391)

Hecate is in Middleton's play, but only as 'y/e cheif Witch', whereas in *Macbeth* she appears to retain her character as the underworld goddess who was the recognized sovereign of witches. At III. v. 1 her name is disyllabic, and so it is in Middleton: but this is also the recognized Shakespearian pronunciation (*Midsummer-Night's Dream*, V. i. 391, *Macbeth*, II. i. 53, III. ii. 41, *Hamlet*, III. i. 269, *Lear*, I. i. 112) except where the name is applied in the sense of witch to the Pucelle in the dubious 1 *Henry VI* (III. ii. 62). There does not appear to be any particular resemblance between the alleged interpolations and Middleton's work: indeed, if 'prettinesses of lyrical fancy' are alien to Shakespeare's treatment of the witches, they are still farther removed from Middleton's coarse and caustic presentation. At IV. i. 39 Hecate enters with 'the other three Witches', which brings the number up to six; and it has been maintained that there are six witches in Middleton's play -- but this belief rests on a misreading of the manuscript (Malone Society edition, p. vi/1).

NOTE F (page 391)

He is Captain in the direction and speech-headings, but is spoken of in the text (l. 3) as 'Serieant', which may point to revision. It appears that sergeant was once a higher rank than now, and Wilson would have him a sergeant-major, who was a commissioned officer -- but that would still not make him a captain. No doubt it could be argued that he was a sergeant when he rescued the king's son and that he had been promoted for his valour, but such an intention would be futile unless made explicit -- as, of course, it may have been in a fuller version.