

Scene 32 (V vii 42-84)

A heading for a new scene was -- rightly -- inserted at this point by Pope (1723:596), deleted by Capell (1768:79), reinstated by Dyce (1857:447).

A little later, somewhere on the battlefield.

(V vii 42) *Enter ...* The stage stays empty for a moment, and then Macbeth enters.

(V vii 46) *Enter ...* And now Macduff enters too, from the same side as Macbeth. "Turn, hell-hound, turn!"

(V vii 58) *I bear a charmed life, ...* Just as in scene 29 (V vii 4-6), he still thinks that he can rely on the second apparition's promise.

(V vii 60) *Despair thy charm ...* It takes a few moments, I suppose, before Macduff can digest this information -- another few moments before he sees the joke. And then, to Macbeth's amazement, he bursts out laughing. The audience too will need some time to catch on. The actor should emphasize the words "from his mother's womb", then pause, and then finish the sentence.

(V vii 83) *Exeunt fighting.* After this, Macbeth and Macduff go off. Macbeth is killed and decapitated out of sight; Macduff waits for his cue before entering again (V vii 110). That is all as it should be. Folio adds a mysterious direction -- "Enter fighting, and Macbeth slain" -- which seems to mean that in some production of the play the actors wanted Macbeth to be killed on the stage. But for that to happen large changes would need to be made in the following scene. By itself this direction makes no sense.

There seems to have been a general feeling, on the part of successive generations of actors, that Macbeth ought to be done to death in sight of the audience, for their moral edification. A murderer deserved a public execution. Nobody would have doubted that in Shakespeare's time, let alone in Macbeth's. So why should he escape that final indignity? Shakespeare took him off the stage so that he could be decapitated. If he were spared decapitation, however, he could be killed on the stage.

In Davenant's version of the play, the fight ends with Macbeth being mortally wounded. Macduff speaks a few lines and then makes his exit, carrying off a trophy in the shape

of Macbeth's sword. Macbeth, having fallen to the ground, informs the audience that he has learnt his lesson --

Farewell, vain world, and what's most vain in it,
Ambition! --

and expires (Chetwin 1674:65). Garrick retained the lines written by Davenant for Macduff, but wrote his own dying speech for Macbeth (Bell 1773:69):

'Tis done! the scene of life will quickly close.
Ambition's vain, delusive dreams are fled,
And now I wake to darkness, guilt and horror;
I cannot bear it! let me shake it off ---
'Two' not be; my soul is clogg'd with blood ---
I cannot rise! I dare not ask for mercy ---
It is too late, hell drags me down; I sink,
I sink --- Oh! --- my soul is lost for ever!
Oh!

Oh! indeed. That does not sound in the least like Shakespeare, nor in the least like Macbeth. Kemble deleted Davenant's lines for Macduff (together with the business of the sword) but retained this speech of Garrick's (1794:64). It survived (minus two lines) for some years yet (Longman 1806:71). After that it was dropped, and Macbeth was allowed to die instantly, without saying a word (Oxberry 1821:73).

The actors' dissatisfaction with the end of scene 32 did not stop there: it extended into the final scene, as I hope shortly to show.

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