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## UNIT 3      *MACBETH: PART-II*

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### 3.0 OBJECTIVES

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The previous unit presented a critical analysis of the first and second acts of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. The focus remained on Macbeth's ambition and Lady Macbeth's single-minded concentration on executing the murder and making her husband the king of Scotland. These ambitions are placed against the established construct of the royalty on one hand and the disruptive space of the witches on the other. This unit will acquaint you critically with the sequence of events in Acts III, IV and V that lead to the tragic conclusion of the play.

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### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

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This unit deals with those questions and issues that are apparently situated on the sides of the play but reflect on the text centrally. They point towards specific scenes and characters that remain ordinarily out of the purview such as the Banquet scene, Hecate, Sleep-walking Scene and Lady Macduff. They dramatize the events and make them multi-dimensional. The poetic intensity therein underscores the felt experience. Equally importantly, we take up the Scottish ethos for grasping the action of the play. Together, these help us imagine political changes that complete the frightful picture of accumulated violence. It is suggested in the unit that Macbeth and Lady Macbeth are only an extension of the general pattern of happenings in the play.

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### 3.2 ACT III

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This Act has seven scenes. At the end of the second act, Macbeth has become the king. But meanwhile there has been a lot of bloodshed. The third act is situated in a room in the palace at Forres. In it, the witches' predictions remain a concern throughout the play. Their understanding of the future forms the backdrop against which the game of power will be enacted. Twentieth century criticism, especially that of the second half focusses on the nature of the witches. Are these weird women or are these women who capture the changes in the social structure? The play raises these questions and leaves the reader to think about their nature.

Banquo iterates the witches' prediction as all of them have come true. He also wonders about the possibility of the realisation of the witches' prediction regarding his progeny. Caught in the web of his own ambitious drive, Macbeth, too thinks about the witches' prophecies with regard to Banquo. He is

insecure and wonders if the witches' predictions about Banquo would be true. A well-known soliloquy by Macbeth appears at this crucial juncture. Let us have a look at it:

To be thus is nothing, but to be safely thus:  
Our fears in Banquo  
Stick deep, and in his royalty of nature  
Reigns that which would be fear'd: 'tis much he dares;  
And, to that dauntless temper of his mind,  
He hath a wisdom that doth guide his valour  
To act in safety. There is none but he  
Whose being I do fear: and under him  
My Genius is rebuk'd; as, it is said,  
Mark Antony's was by Caesar. He chid the Sisters,  
When first they put the name of King upon me,  
And bade them speak to him; then, prophet-like,  
They hail'd him father to a line of kings:  
Upon my head they plac'd a fruitless crown,  
And put a barren sceptre in my gripe,  
Thence to be wrench'd with an unlineal hand,  
No son of mine succeeding. If 't be so,  
For Banquo's issue have I fil'd my mind;  
For them the gracious Duncan have I murder'd;  
Put rancours in the vessel of my peace,  
Only for them; and mine eternal jewel  
Given to the common Enemy of man,  
To make them kings, the seeds of Banquo kings!  
Rather than so, come, fate, into the list.  
And champion me to th' utterance! (3.1 47-71)

Macbeth contemplates on his act of pursuing ambition and its repercussions. He asks himself if he performed the act of murder to ensure this position for Banquo's children. Phrases such as "barren sceptre" and "fruitless crown" indicate Macbeth's deep-rooted ambition and the attention given to the witches' predictions. He has succumbed completely to the web spun by the sisters. The realm of Hecate, one of amorality, not only plays with Macbeth's sentiment but reflects social change. The existing values of the divine right of kingship, inheritance through primogeniture all stand challenged. A new order sets in, and it challenges the Elizabethan world order. The feudal notion of inheritance stands questioned and this in turn undermines any idea of authority. The Machiavellian strategy becomes complex and begins to work against itself. Like a feudal monarch, Macbeth wants to ensure the crown for himself and his progeny. He seeks the intervention of "fate" in the context.

The path to fulfilment of ambition is a spiral into more murder and killing. Having murdered Duncan, Macbeth wants to alter the witches' prophecy. He hires murderers to kill Banquo and his son, Fleance. The murderers are plausibly "officers, cast perhaps for some misdemeanour and out of luck" (Muir, Kenneth. Ed. *William Shakespeare: Macbeth*. New Delhi: Methuen, 1984. 76). Macbeth instigates them against Banquo and urges them to murder. He tells the murderers:

Well then, now  
Have you consider'd of my speeches?—know  
That it was he, in the times past, which held you  
Also under fortune, which you thought had been  
Our innocent self? This I made good to you  
In our last conference; pass'd in probation with you,  
How you were borne in hand; how cross'd; the instruments;

Who wrought with them; and all things else, that might,  
To half a soul, and to a notion craz'd,  
Say, 'Thus did Banquo.' (3.1 75-83)

Mark how in the above lines, Macbeth blames Banquo for their condition, creating the situation to execute the murder. In fact, he chides them: "Are you so gospell'dd,/ To pray for this good man, and for his issue,/ Whose heavy hand had bow'd you to the grave" (3.1 86-88). Both murderers, therefore, commit themselves to the killing of Banquo. Who are these people who murder at Macbeth's command? They are men who have suffered "the vile blows and buffets of the world", "weary with disasters, tugg'd with fortune." Macbeth takes advantage of their situation to sustain power.

Meanwhile Lady Macbeth prepares for the King's banquet, for which Banquo has been invited. Macbeth continues to remain troubled about the witches' prediction regarding Banquo and Fleance. He tells Lady Macbeth: "O! full of scorpions is my mind, dear wife!/ thou knows't that Banquo, and his Fleance, lives" (3.2 35-36). At this point, there is a distinct transformation in the attitudes of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. Where Macbeth's language is steeped more and more in evil, Lady Macbeth's tone changes. The beginning of the Act signals Lady Macbeth's discomfiture. She realizes that desire has been realised without "content" and they are in a state of 'doubtful joy". She seeks a sense of normalcy in Macbeth and urges him to prepare for the banquet. However, Macbeth takes on the disruptive mantle and his language becomes more akin to the world of Hecate and the weird sisters. He seeks the cover of "seeling Night" to hide the "tender eye of pitiful Day" as Banquo's murder is about to take place. The imagery grows darker in the following lines:

And, with thy bloody and invisible hand,/ Cancel, and tear to pieces, that great bond/ Which keeps me pale!—Light thickens; and the crow/ Makes wing to th'rooky wood" 3.1 (48-51).

In the third scene of the Act, we have not two but three murderers who prepare to kill Banquo. There is speculation about the third one — Macbeth himself. But as Kenneth Muir points out, "Macbeth's agitation in III.iv, when he hears that Fleance has escaped is proof that he cannot have been present at the murder of Banquo" (86-87). The murderers kill Banquo but Fleance manages to escape. This disturbs Macbeth even more, as it increases the possibility of realisation of the witches' prediction about Banquo.

### 3.2.1 The Banquet Scene

The banquet scene is at once a celebration of Macbeth's position as king and an undermining of the same. His psychological disintegration is a symptom of the schism in the body politic. As the murderer reveals, "Fleance is scap'd", Macbeth begins to lose confidence and becomes insecure. He says:

There comes my fit again: I had else been perfect;  
Whole as the marble, founded as the rock,  
As broad and general as the casing air:  
But now, I am cabin'd, cribb'd, confin'd, bound in  
To saucy doubts and fears.—But Banquo's safe? (3.4 20-25)

In the banquet scene, Banquo's ghost appears and takes Macbeth's seat. The conflicts are rife in Macbeth's mind. Banquo's ghost reminds Macbeth both of his brutal killings and Fleance's claim to the throne. As the scene continues, Lady Macbeth tries hard to control the situation. She tells the nobles that Macbeth has been getting fits since his youth and that this is momentary. Aside, she challenges his masculinity and tells him, "O! these flaws and starts/ (Impostors to true fear), would well become/ A woman's story at winter's fire" (3.4 63-64). At this stage, Lady Macbeth is in control of herself but Macbeth is not. Banquo's ghost is visible only to him and indicates a troubled mind. (Remember the hallucination about the dagger). Shakespeare's use of Banquo's ghost is a reminder of the loss of humanity and friendship in the wake of Machiavellian ambition. Macbeth dreads this flash from the past, as he says,

If charnel-houses and our graves must send  
Those that we bury, back, our monuments  
Shall be the maws of kites. (.....)

Macbeth calls his fits of digression a “strange infirmity”. As Macbeth thinks of his deeds in the past, Banquo’s ghost re-enters to disturb him. He describes the ghost thus: “Thy bones are marowless, thy blood is cold;/ Thou hast no speculation in those eyes,/ Which thou dost glare with” (3.4 92-94). Macbeth is disturbed and unable to accept the enormity of his own actions. He challenges Banquo to come in any form, the “Russian bear, “the arm’d rhinoceros” or th’Hyrcean tiger”, but that of the ghost. As Macbeth sees Banquo’s ghost, the real world of kings and queens and the unreal ones of the witches and ghosts is seen in a flash. Lady Macbeth brings the banquet to a close. She urges the nobles to leave—“At once, good night:--/ Stand not upon the order of your going,/ But go at once” (3.4 118). The nobles are asked to leave immediately without following rank, an indication that order has once again been flouted. Macbeth’s subversion of Duncan’s right to the throne by violence is Machivellian; it established a new order through blood and gore. One must keep in mind how at the beginning of the play, Duncan’s reign was preserved by Macbeth’s display of violence on the battlefield. Both systems perpetuate through violence and are hence seen as wanting even as they reflect the warps and wefts of society. Macbeth can sense the anarchy:

It will have blood, they say: blood will have blood:  
Stones have been known to move, and trees to speak;  
Augures and understood relations, have  
By maggot-pies, and choughs, and rooks, brought forth  
The secret’st man of blood. What is the night? (3.4 121-125)

The brutality of killing that Macbeth had been valourised for is suspect in the new context. The play makes us think about the nature of violence in relation to the state as body politic. Violence is anarchic and there is a thin line of demarcation in its use for or against the state. The violence used to defend the state can soon enough work against it destroying all that comes in its wake.

### 3.2.2 Hecate

In the next scene Macbeth meets the Weird Sisters. In 3.5, one can mark the unreal world of Hecate and the witches. Hecate’s monologue forms the entire scene in Act III and provides an insight into their world. Hecate chides the sisters for having excluded her from the plan “To trade and traffic with Macbeth,/ In riddles, and affairs of death;”. Even as she rues the fact that she was never called to play her part in affecting Macbeth’s destiny, she also sees him as the “wayward son”. He like most others is spiteful and wrathful. One can ask about the role of Machiavellian politics in this regard. Where it marks a distinct socio-historical shift, the brutality that accompanies it can hardly be the answer to the problems of the ordinary world. The play problematizes this issue. Read the following:

Have I not reason, beldams as you are,  
Saucy, and overbold? How did you dare  
To trade and traffic with Macbeth,  
In riddles and affairs of death;  
And I, the mistress of your charms,  
The close contriver of all harms,  
Was never called to bear my part,  
Or show the glory of our art?  
And, which is worse, all you have done  
Hath been but for a wayward son,  
Spiteful and wrathful; who, as others do,  
Loves for his own ends, not for you.

But make amends now: Get you gone,  
And at the pit of Acheron  
Meet me i' th' morning: thither he  
Will come to know his destiny.  
Your vessels, and your spells, provide,  
Your charms, and everything beside.  
I am for th' air; This night I'll spend  
Unto a dismal and a fatal end:  
Great business must be wrought ere noon.  
Upon the corner of the moon  
There hangs a vap'rous drop profound.  
I'll catch it ere it come to ground:  
And that, distill'd by magic sleights,  
Shall raise such artificial sprites,  
As, by the strength of their illusion,  
Shall draw him on to his confusion.  
He shall spurn fate, scorn death, and bear  
His hopes'bove wisdom, grace, and fear;  
And you all know, security  
Is mortal's chiefest enemy, (3.5 2-35)

Hecate's speech indicates that things are about to change rapidly. Macbeth will soon be caught in the web of his own trap. The "artificial sprites" spun by the witches shall draw him to "his confusion". He shall "spurn fate, scorn death." The power wielded by Hecate and the other witches is evident in these lines. They have indeed caught Macbeth's attention who will meet them again to know his destiny. The final statement about security indicates that Macbeth in his pursuit for a secure position is wrestling with the social forces. Having changed the course prescribed by the kingly powers, he now seeks stasis to secure his own position. Hecate reflects on this idea as she says, "security/ Is mortal's chiefest enemy". The next scene, 3.6, voices the suspicions and discomfort of the nobles as they sense Macbeth's machinations. Lennox says, "Men must not walk too late". He recounts how Duncan was killed and Malcolm and Donalbain fled the country. The security guards too were killed by Macbeth as he claimed to grieve at the King's death. Similarly, Banquo was murdered and Fleance fled. The scene also reveals how Malcolm seeks allies abroad. Interestingly, just as Macbeth, one of the generals in Duncan's army worked to fortify his position, so, too, Macduff gradually emerges to ensure Malcolm's claim to the throne. It seems to have become a vicious cycle offering no escape.

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### 3.3 ACT IV

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#### 3.3.1 The Witches' Predictions, the Apparitions and the Pageant

This act begins in the same way as Act I, with the witches at a house in Forres with a "boiling cauldron". Like the first scene that made significant predictions about Macbeth, this scene, too, foretells what is going to happen to him in the future. These lines reveal the witches' intentions as also the world they inhabit. They have access to plants and animals and they understand their world in a different manner. The words are spoken like a puzzle and in a manner of equivocation. The reference to spells would "thrice" create an eerie atmosphere. The witches have access to the forest, its flora and fauna. Their additions to the cauldron range from the "toad", "Fillet of a fenny snake", "eye of newt" and "toe of frog", and many such. It also has "Root of hemlock, digg'd I' th'dark", "Gall of goat, and slips of yew". The spell, "Double, double toil and trouble;/ Fire burn; and cauldron, bubble" remains a refrain in the play. The witches prepare for Macbeth's coming as decided in the previous scene by Hecate. Macbeth seeks the witches' attention thus:

I conjure you, by that which you profess,

Howe'er you come to know it, answer me:  
Though you untie the winds, and let them fight  
Against the churches; though the yesty waves  
Confound and swallow navigation up;  
Though bladed corn be lodg'd and trees blown down;  
Though castles topple on their warders' heads;  
Though palaces and pyramids do slope  
Their heads to their foundations; though the treasure  
Of Nature's germens tumble all together,  
Even till destruction sicken, answer me  
To what I ask you. (4.1 50-61)

Macbeth presents the witches as a disruptive force. They let loose elements that fight the order of the day. They fight against the churches, topple castles and make palaces and pyramids slope. In this way, the world of the witches challenges the established order. The supernatural or the fantastic is the alternative realm. The predictions made by the witches through the apparitions they invoke determine the course of the play. Their predictions are as follows: "Macbeth! Macbeth! Macbeth! beware Macduff;/ Beware the Thane of Fife.—Dismiss me.—Enough" (4.1. 70-1) And Be bloody, bold, and resolute: laugh to scorn/  
The power of man, for none of woman born/ Shall harm Macbeth (79-81)

Be lion-mettled, proud, and take no care  
Who chafes, who frets, or where conspirers are:  
Macbeth shall never vanquished be, until  
Great Birnam Wood to high Dunsinane Hill  
Shall come against him.(4.1 90-93)

The first apparition is that of an "armed head". It is believed that this represents Macdonald's decapitated head brought in by Macbeth to Duncan's court and foreshadows his own which will be brought by Macduff. The second apparition is that of the "bloody child". This could be Macduff born by Caesarean section. It could also be Fleance or the line of Banquo meant to succeed Macbeth. The third apparition is that of a "child crowned with a tree in his hand". This could be Malcolm who will finally inherit the throne. However, Macbeth misses the implications of these apparitions and the tone of equivocation as he says, "Then live Macduff: what I need fear of thee." Hearing these predictions by the apparitions, Macbeth is convinced that no one can dislodge him from his position. However, he misses the tone of equivocation in their predictions, something he realises only much later. The witches warn Macbeth about Macduff. They urge him to be brave and bold. But this glimpse of the future gives Macbeth the illusion of security. It tells him that no one of woman born can harm him. The witches also tell him that he need not bother till Birnam Wood marches to Dunsinane. These two ideas make him feel secure. He believes in words such as: "Who can impress the forest; bid the tree/ Unfix his earth bound root?" (4.1 95). Doing this would be unnatural and hence impossible. Macbeth believes he can never be defeated. However, going by the witches' earlier prophecy he continues to feel insecure and asks if Banquo would be king. Following his question, there is a show of eight kings. Macbeth is disturbed as the last one in this pageant of kings is Banquo.

Thou art too like the spirit of Banquo: Down!  
Thy crown does sear mine eyeballs:—and thy hair,  
Thou other gold-bound brow, is like the first:—  
A third is like the former.—filthy hags!  
Why do you show me this?—A fourth?—Start, eyes!  
What! will the line stretch out to th' crack of doom?  
Another yet?—A seventh?—I'll see no more:—  
And yet the eighth appears, who bears a glass,  
Which shows me many more; and some I see,  
That twofold balls and treble sceptres carry.

Horrible sight!—Now, I see, 'tis true;  
For the blood-bolter'd Banquo smiles upon me,  
And points at them for his.—but why  
(4.1 112-124)

The witches' prediction regarding Macduff plays on Macbeth's mind and the endless cycle of violence that engulfs the self continues. As Macbeth gets to know that Macduff has "fled to England", a brutal perpetration of murder begins. In an important aside Macbeth says, "From this moment,/The very firstlings of my heart shall be/ The firstlings of my hand" (4.1). He decides to seize Macduff's castle at Fife and kill his wife and children. Note how Macbeth gets trapped in his own actions as he continues to murder with greater ferocity.

### 3.3.2 Lady Macduff

The scene shifts to Macduff's castle where blood and gore will take place. This scene with its vivid descriptions of brutal killings alerts us to the nature of violence in the play. Macduff has fled to England making his family the sacrificial goat. However, this idea sits uneasily with Lady Macduff and she is quick to ask—"Wisdom! To leave his wife, to leave his babes". She resents this and says, "He wants the natural touch". According to her even the "poor wren" fights for its young ones but Macduff has abandoned his family. This draws attention to how loyalty and construction of the nation are made on the bodies of women and children. Macduff's son appears briefly, but plays an important role. He is reasonable, practical, witty and understands his mother. Take a look at the following lines:

Son: Why should I, mother? Poor birds they are not set for.  
My father is not dead, for all your saying.

Lady Macd.: Yes, he is dead; how wilt thou do for a father?

Son: Nay, how will you do for a husband?

Lady Macd.: Why, I can buy me twenty at any market.

Son: Then you'll buy 'em to sell again.

Lady Macd.: Thou speak'st with all thy wit: and yet, i' faith,  
With wit enough for thee.

...

Lady Macd.: Now, God help thee, poor monkey!  
But how wilt thou do for a father?

Son: If he were dead, you'd weep for

him: if you would not, it were a good sign

that I should quickly have a new father. (4.235-43, 58-62)

This witty exchange between the mother and son is light-hearted. But mark the perceptive nature of the young boy brought to fore in a few lines. The killing of the entire family acquires greater tragic intensity. Lady Macduff who had already been apprised of the situation by Rosse asks—"Whither should I fly?/ I have done no harm/ But I remember now/ I am in this earthly world, where, to do harm/ Is often laudable" (4.2 72-75). She thinks herself to be a pawn in the hands of her husband and his state machinations. In all these strategies and counter strategies she is abandoned by Macduff and can be easily dispensed with. Lady Macduff has the chance to flee but does not do so. She decides to stay on and is brutally killed by the murderers.

### 3.3.3 The State of Scotland and the Healing Powers of England

The next scene is between Malcolm and Macduff and it describes the state of Scotland. Malcolm's speech is reflective and searching as he laments: "Each new morn,/ New widows howl, new orphans cry". He

maps Macbeth's transition from a good person to a treacherous man. His speech indicates how one that is good also has the potential to transform into something evil or monstrous. This is in line with the tone of equivocation in the play. Malcolm notes how Macbeth who worked for the interest of the state has ended up destroying it completely. He says, "Angels are bright still, though the brightest fell:/ Though all things foul would wear the brows of grace/ Yet Grace must still look so". Malcolm asks Macduff as to why he left his family in haste. To this Macduff replies:

Bleed, bleed, poor country!  
Great tyranny, lay thou thy basis sure,

....

Malcolm:

I think our country sinks beneath the yoke.  
It weeps, it bleeds, and each new day a gash  
Is added to her wounds. I think withal  
There would be hands uplifted in my right;  
And here from gracious England have I offer  
Of goodly thousands. But, for all this,  
When I shall tread upon the tyrant's head,  
Or wear it on my sword, yet my poor country  
Shall have more vices than it had before,  
More suffer, and more sundry ways than ever,  
By him that shall succeed. (4.3 31-32, 39-48)

Malcolm presents England as a solution to the problems that Scotland is facing. Scotland has become a country with gashes and wounds whereas England provides the healing touch. Malcolm tests Macduff's loyalty towards him and the state as he says that even if the "tyrant" was quashed, the "poor country" will have more vices than before. The exchange between Malcolm and Macduff ponders over the attributes of a good ruler. Malcolm deliberately assigns negative qualities to himself to assess Macduff's allegiance. He tells the nobleman that he has vices which if they are revealed, "black Macbeth/ Will seem as pure as snow". To himself Malcolm assigns "voluptuousness"—"your wives, your daughters,/ Your matrons, and your maids, could not fill up" (4.3 61-62). However, Macduff believes in him and says that "Boundless intemperance" is a tyranny but "there cannot be/ That vulture in you, to devour so many". The second evil Malcolm presents in his persona is that of "avarice". Here, too, Macduff believes that "Scotland had foisons to fill up your will". Malcolm then shares with Macduff his complete lack of "king-becoming graces". Malcolm considers himself devoid of "Justice, Verity, Temp'rance, Stableness,/ Bounty, Perseverance, Mercy, Lowliness,/ Devotion, Patience, Courage, Fortitude". At this Macduff laments that such a person is "Fit to govern?/ No, not to live.—O nation miserable!/ With an untitled bloody tyrant bloody-sceptered,/ When shalt thou see thy wholesome days again/ Since that the truest issue of thy throne/ By his own interdiction stands accus'd,/ And does blaspheme his breed?" (4.3 102-109).

With this response Macduff has won Malcolm's confidence. He refers to Macduff as "Child of integrity". Malcolm finally speaks his mind to Macduff as he tells him that all the blames he had taken on himself are "strangers to my nature". He tells him, "I am yet/ Unknown to woman; never was forsworn;/ Scarcely have coveted what was my 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." (4.3 125-131). The idea of kingship and loyalty is discussed again. Macbeth's loyalty to the King and the state wins for him Duncan's confidence. A new cycle can be seen at work and one can observe a similar pattern at work here. Macduff will be the loyal subject to Malcolm through his love for the nation. Macbeth's sentiment was entwined with ambition. At this stage Macduff advocates selfless love for Scotland and rejects the possibility of a corrupt ruler. Such an attitude endears him to the state.

This scene also brings in the relationship between Scotland and England. The former is seen as a country with worries but the latter is a nation that has the capacity to provide the solution. The King of England is



seen as exemplary; he is both a king and a healer. Take a look at Malcolm's speech to understand this dynamic.

'Tis called the evil:

A most miraculous work in this good King,  
Which often, since my here-remain in England,  
I have seen him do. How he solicits Heaven,  
Himself best knows; but strangely-visited people,  
All swoln and ulcerous, pitiful to the eye,  
The mere despair of surgery, he cures,  
Hanging a golden stamp about their necks,  
Put on with holy prayers: And, 'tis spoken,  
To the succeeding royalty he leaves  
The healing benediction. With this strange virtue,  
He hath a heavenly gift of prophecy;  
And sundry blessings hang about his throne,  
That speak him full of grace. (4.3 147-158)

These lines present the English King as one who gives stability to the nation and heals its people especially through his "miraculous work"; an idea found wanting in Scotland. The scene ends with Rosse informing Macduff of the murder of his family and servants. Malcolm extends the metaphor of healing as he urges Macduff to make "med'cines of our great revenge,/ To cure this deadly grief". But there is a shift in tone at the end of this scene. It is as Malcolm points out "manly". Macduff seeks revenge in killing Macbeth who he refers to as the "fiend of Scotland". This once again brings all within the cycle of violence.

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### 3.4 ACT V

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#### 3.4.1 The Sleepwalking Scene

The last act begins with a discussion of Lady Macbeth's sleepwalking. The Waiting-Gentlewoman apprises the Doctor of Lady Macbeth's strange behaviour of walking in her sleep. She informs him:

"Since his Majesty went into the field, 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". (5.1 4-8).

The Doctor interprets this as a "great perturbation in nature" and asks if she speaks anything in this "slumbry agitation". The Gentlewoman refuses to reveal the details. At this point, Lady Macbeth walks in with a candle in hand. They both watch her rubbing her hands in her sleep. The following lines from Lady Macbeth's sleepwalking scene are the oft quoted ones and shed new light on her character:

*Lady M.* Out, damned spot! Out, I say!—One; two; why, then 'tis time to do't. —Hell is murky. —Fie, my Lord, fie! A soldier and afeard? —what need we fear who knows it, when none can call our power to account? —Yet who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him?

*Doct.* Do you mark that?

*Lady M.* The thane of Fife had a wife. Where is she now?—What, will these hands ne'er be clean?—No more o' that, my lord, no more o' that. You mar all with this starting.

*Doct.* Go to, go to. You have known what you should not.

*Gent.* She has spoke what she should not, I am sure of that. Heaven knows what she has known.

*Lady M.* Here's the smell of the blood still. All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand. Oh, Oh, Oh!

*Doct.* What a sigh is there! The heart is sorely charged.

*Gent.* I would not have such a heart in my bosom for the dignity of the whole body.  
(5.1 33-51)

Lady Macbeth's understanding of recent events is important. It seems as if the deeds of blood and gore are condensed into the spots on her hands. The sight of blood disturbs her. It remains ingrained in her mind as a symbol of the deed performed by Macbeth and her; even though she was unable to kill Duncan as he reminds her of her own father. But her erratic speech is important for the reference to the Thane of Fife and his wife. The metonymic image of blood keeps on multiplying from Duncan to the Thane of Fife's wife. It is indeed a bloody picture. Lady Macbeth realises that all the perfumes of Arabia will not take the smell of blood away from her hands. All these murders have been committed by Macbeth or executed on his orders. But, she sees herself as one with Macbeth and the impact of these killings is transposed onto her. The Gentlewoman's comment qualifies it further. She feels that she would not possess a heart of this sort for the "dignity" of the body. This indicates how Lady Macbeth has violated mind and body in being both an active and a passive accomplice. Lady Macbeth's final call is "What's done cannot be undone. To bed, to bed, to bed." The Doctor realises the enormity of what was being said and is quick to point out that such a disease is beyond his experience. He realises that Lady Macbeth's mind is seized with horror at the deeds as they are "unnatural". He says, "More needs she the divine than the physician."

### 3.4.2 The Tragic End

The next scene shifts to the country near Dunsinane. The soldiers discuss how Malcolm and Macduff supported by the English forces are fast approaching Scotland. They will meet near Birnam wood. They refer to Macbeth as the "tyrant". He is seen as anarchic by them—"Some say he's mad; others, that lesser hate him,/ Do call it valiant fury" (5.2. 13-16). All in all, they also realise how he will no longer be able to sustain his rule. Macbeth has failed as ruler as "Those he commands move only in command,/ Nothing in love."

On his part, Macbeth is seen in a room in his castle as he clings to the witches' prophecies that nothing can harm him till Birnam wood marches to Dunsinane, and that no one born of woman can kill him. Even as Lady Macbeth's condition is made known to him, he instructs the Doctor to "Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow." Meanwhile the soldiers in Malcolm's army are instructed to prepare by cutting down a bough and hold it before them and wait for the opportune moment. Macbeth is informed of Lady Macbeth's death and he says,

She should have died hereafter.  
There would have been a time for such a word—  
To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,  
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day  
To the last syllable of recorded time;  
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools  
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!  
Life's but a walking shadow; a poor player,  
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,  
And then is heard no more: it is a tale  
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,  
Signifying nothing. (5.5 17-28)

Note how these lines bring forth the transience of life. Macbeth caught within the web of politics is struck by the temporariness of life as he experiences the loss of Lady Macbeth. The messenger informs Macbeth of a moving grove and his worst fears prove to be true. According to the witches his safety was incumbent

on Birnam wood moving up to Dunsinane. He thought this to be an impossibility but soon enough realises the witches' tone was one of "equivocation". Malcolm with the support of Macduff and young Siward has moved to Dunsinane. Macbeth is confident of his invincibility as he believes that there can be none not born of a woman. He boasts to Macduff, "I bear a charmed life; which must not yield/ To one of woman born". Macduff informs him that "Macduff was from his mother's womb/ Untimely ripp'd." Macbeth realises the real meaning of the witches' prophecy. He calls them "juggling fiends" that "palter with us in a double sense." The witches' chant—"Double double toil and trouble" reverberates in this context. Macbeth is finally slain by Macduff. In the final scene in the castle, as Macduff enters with Macbeth's decapitated head, one can mark the beginning of another cycle of violence. Macduff's rhetoric about love for the state has evidenced itself in the form of an extreme state of violence. It is precisely this kind of valour that Macbeth had been praised for at the beginning of the play. These overtones disturb the semblance of peace and prosperity as Macduff stands in the same relation with Malcolm as did Macbeth with Duncan. One is left with uneasy thoughts as one thinks whether this cycle of violence will really end. The play ends with Malcolm's coronation at Scone. He also calls his thanes and kinsmen, earls, a term that belonged to the English court. The play remains a tragedy not just because of the killing of Macbeth but also due to the relationship of the subject to the king and the state, an allegiance cemented with violence.

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### 3.5 LET US SUM UP

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This chapter analysed Acts III, IV and V of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. The play is a tragedy and it ends with the killing of Macbeth. These three acts trace a rapid deterioration in *Macbeth*. The second act ends with establishing Macbeth as king, but in the third one that power of his as a king becomes unstable. As blood and gore continue with the killing of Banquo and Macduff's family, it starts hanging heavy on Macbeth's mind. He is both disturbed and insecure as he sees Banquo's ghost take his seat in the banquet scene. Hecate's world and the witches' predictions continue to influence Macbeth. Brutality and an endless sequence of violence finally shakes all sense of normalcy. The fifth act focusses on Lady Macbeth and her sleepwalking and death. The Act also concentrates on the attributes of a good king while bringing forth the relationship between England and Scotland. The problems of Scotland are resolved with the help of the English forces. The witches' prophesies are realised as Macduff kills Macbeth. The play ends with Malcolm as king and Macduff his loyal subject, a replication of the Macbeth-Duncan equation. The tragic overtones disturb the sense of peace established at the end of the play.

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### 3.6 GLOSSARY

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| <b><i>Barren sceptre:</i></b>                    | The idea that Macbeth will not beget kings.                                    |
| <b><i>Misdemeanour:</i></b>                      | Bad behavior.  |
| <b><i>Parricide:</i></b>                         | Killing of the father; in this case the King.                                  |
| <b><i>Lion-mettled:</i></b>                      | Brave heart.   |
| <b><i>Hyrcean tiger:</i></b>                     | Hyrkania is a place known for its tigers.                                      |
| <b><i>Acheron:</i></b>                           | one of the rivers of Hades.  |
| <b><i>Twofold balls and treble sceptres:</i></b> | They refer to King James I who had united the thrones of England and Scotland. |
| <b><i>Boundless intemperance:</i></b>            | over-indulgence.   |
| <b><i>Juggling fiends:</i></b>                   | deceptive.   |
| <b><i>Palter:</i></b>                            | trick.   |

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### 3.7 QUESTIONS

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1. Critically analyse the Banquet Scene.
2. Does Macbeth understand the real meaning of the apparitions? Comment.
3. What are the implications of Lady Macbeth's sleep-walking?
4. Discuss Hecate's monologue.
5. Analyse the theme of equivocation in the play.

6. What do the witches predict about Macbeth's future? Are these realised? Discuss
7. Bring out the idea of violence and its relation to the state in Macbeth.

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### 3.8 SUGGESTED READINGS

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1. Muir, Kenneth. Ed. *William Shakespeare: Macbeth*. New Delhi: Methuen, 1984.
2. Nagpal Payal. Ed. *William Shakespeare: Macbeth*. New Delhi: Worldview P, 2016.



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