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CLAMOR: MALEFICA, PROTEST, AND THE OCCULT ECONOMY

IN EARLY MODERN ENGLAND

A Thesis
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by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis attempts to figure witchcraft practices within a larger economic context whereby cursing and maleficent acts in general might be read as a means of political protest against the political and economic destabilization of common rights. By reading cursing and prophecy as epistemological weaponry, the thesis establishes a theory of early modern terror that corresponds to the effects of these tactics on local and national levels. Readings of traditional witchcraft literature and Shakespeare's *Macbeth* will hopefully allow for an understanding of witchcraft that is heavily concerned over the nature of agency within the period, particularly with regard to the ways in which magic and prognostication stimulated local economies. These "occult economies," in turn, can be read as interactive systems whereby local agents can generate larger effects within a national discourse by utilizing feedback loops generated through local interactions between magic and markets.

I. INTRODUCTION

The subject of terrorism in current intellectual debates is perpetually fraught with

difficulties over how it should (or could) be defined.[1] Examining the phenomenon of terror prior

to the French Revolution is also a difficult task, for one must question what *terror* itself meant as

a political action before it was officially conceptualized as both an event and a tactic in the late

18th century. Consequently, terror in early modern England has remained largely unaddressed,

apart from considerations of the Gunpowder Plot of 1605 *qua* terrorist act.[2] Early modern

terrorism, however, like any other violent political action, can be understood within the cultural

milieu out of which it emerges as a political tactic. Ultimately, this is a question of scale, as

history does not appear to provide us, as modern readers, with another event (apart from the 1605

Plot) that immediately registers as "terroristic." For this study, I want to consider the

phenomenon on a relatively small scale, where the agents of terror are members of local

communities attempting to inflict psychological violence on those who had created a hostile

environment for them. Terror, as I will stress throughout this inquiry, is an epistemological

problem as it correlates to what its victims *believe* about the world and how an agent can tamper

with the *habitus* of belief in a systematic way, especially within the context of the occult services

industry, where prognosticators and potion-makers interacted with both local markets, but also

clients who were heavily invested in commerce overseas. Much of the focus of this project will

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[1] See Bruce Hoffman. "Defining Terrorism." *Inside Terrorism*. (New York, Columbia University Press, 2006), 1-42.
[2] See Chris R. Kyle. "Early Modern Terrorism: The Gunpowder Plot of 1605 and its Aftermath." *Terror: From Tyrannicide to Terrorism*. Eds. Brett Bowden and Michael T. Davis. (St. Lucia: Univ. of Queensland Press, 2008), 42-55.

be to establish how these interactions between the occult and the commercial were symbiotic and that this interconnection left the former open to prosecution and the latter to the manipulation.

Early modern religious beliefs will play a key role in establishing how terror works as it will be impossible to understand terror without accepting how the "fear and trembling" that Kierkegaard emphasized in Christian metaphysics plays an integral role in the construction of the epistemological *reality* for the early modern subject. Consequently, otherworldly concepts such as God, Satan, heaven, and hell are an inextricable part of what is *physically* produced (*qua* cause) in the material world, from cathedrals to crusades to St. Teresa's upturned eyes. Accordingly, categories such as the mystical and the mechanical, the mental and the miraculous will all be considered within an organic epistemological matrix wherein they will overlap and compete with each other. This confluence of the religious, the scientific, and the magical are also reflected in the philosophical trends around 1600 as Neoplatonism, Hermeticism, and the birth pangs of modern scientific method all emerge during a period that is extremely concerned with the interactions between heterogeneous systems. As we will see, the notion of an *occult economy* will help to conceptualize how agents within religions, economic, and social structures negotiated the space around them, relying on information that was garnered through analogical sympathies with both their organic environments and the means by which those environments were circulated within local economies. Although this study is ultimately concerned with the nature of magical thinking in general, it will focus primarily on three areas of inquiry with regards to the ways in which agents sought to resist social and economic pressures during a period of massive population grown, the erosion of common lands, and rapid inflation. Against these encroachments to public security, agents employ the medium of their disenfranchisement

or exploitation as the medium for their resistance: as we will see throughout this inquiry, the medium will become the message, the vehicle of terror that delivers the semiotic payload.[3]

The first chapter of this thesis will focus primarily on cursing – specifically the cursing of land and/or agrarian property. This tactic consists of attempts to destroy the productive capabilities of the arable or pasture land as a backlash against the spatial encroachment of "primitive," early capitalist enclosing and engrossing processes. Since much of the data for this study is garnered from the literature surrounding witchcraft, overlapping concerns will arise over the efficacy of magic and the changing religious environment of the 16th and 17th centuries, and it will therefore be important to frame the witch-figure as a political agent who, in reaction to local exploitation, in turn, exploits local fears to generated an environment of terror amongst village populations where these local interactions came to be amplified through both word of mouth and print.

The second chapter of this inquiry is subdivided into two parts. In the first section, I attempt to establish, as I will in the first chapter, the economic and ecological (*oikos*) realities of the lower orders of *Macbeth*'s Scotland by showing how Duncan's ineptitude comes to mirror many of the specific economic fears that emerge in England at the turn of the seventeenth-century. By doing so, this section will establish a basis for the weird sisters' agency within the play, as I move to establish their role as professionals within the occult economy and to what end they will come to employ Macbeth in their prophetic machinations.

Lastly, the latter section of this extended second chapter will attempt to establish a basis by which we might be able to translate the sisters' local concerns into a larger-scale political arena than the neighborhoods we will have explored in chapter one. The section also contains an extended discussion of what exactly it is that the sisters recognize within Macbeth, as I will

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[3] See Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1994), 1.

argue that it is his *bêtise*, his heroic stupidity, that they believe might be the dose of terror that the state needs to establish some sense of control over an aristocracy that has made the body politic the victim of its own incapacity to regulate itself. The section will conclude with a reading of how the sisters' use of prognositication plays out, notably within the initial conditions that the readings leading up to it have helped to establish. Prophecy, in the world of *Macbeth*, will become a means by which the sisters assert a mode of control over Macbeth simply due to the utter obliqueness of their interactions with him. Lastly, the chapter will explore in detail how Hecate comes to intervene in their political experiment by both pointing out to the sisters where they have erred in their political judgment, and the corresponding means by which they will undo their absolutist project – a project, that, by the time of their second meeting with him, has derailed into an orgy of stupidity and cruelty, the excess that the sisters originally recognized in him as the *pharmakon* for Duncan's rule.

II. TOWARDS A THEORY OF TERROR[4] IN EARLY MODERN ENGLAND

In *Leviathan* (1651), Hobbes speaks of a specific type of fear – *panic terror* – a "fear without the apprehension of why or what," that multiplies and generates a situation of terror.[5] For Hobbes, this only occurs in the urban "multitude," but as we begin to examine phenomena such as the proliferation of witchcraft accusations in the late 16th century, we realize that irrational fears can disseminate through lower population densities as well. Concordantly, if terror, for Hobbes, is inextricable from the ontology of sovereignty, then we may want to consider how the act of resistance generates a sovereign position of agency held in place by the *recognition* by the farmer/magistrate/king of the power of the terrorizing act, as that recognition itself was the basis of the sovereign's negation of the all-against-all in the first place.[6] In the cases of terror I will be examining (agrarian or otherwise), the power of maleficent acts to terrorize lay precisely in their capacity to upset these structures of recognition simply via the victims' belief in their machinations. In some cases, as we will see, it was an attempt to utterly disrupt the social order as a means of revenge against a system that disenfranchised the elderly and/or those operating within the occult services market. Later, we will explore slightly more organized means of deploying terror that will help to illustrate how involved these women were

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[4] "Terror, *v*. 1. *trans.* To strike (someone) with terror, to terrify; to fill (a dream, etc.) with terror." OED Online. March 2012. Oxford University Press. The OED cites the un-attributed play, *First Pt. Reign Richard II* (IV. 96) as the first recorded usage, c. 1595.
[5] *Leviathan*. Ed. Edwin Curley. (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1994), 31.
[6] See C.A.J. Coady, "War and Terrorism," *A Companion to Applied Ethics*. Eds. R.G. Frey and Christopher Heath Wellman. (New York: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 254-266.

with the expanding English economy, and how, in *Macbeth*, the sisters attempt to use occult techniques to instigate a regime change.

As Bruce Hoffman notes in *Defining Terrorism*, an act of terror is "designed or intended to have consequences or create psychological repercussions beyond the act itself."[7] In this sense, *malefica* are "systematic" violence,[8] i.e. they seem to aim beyond the epicenter of the act itself. If terror, as Hoffman suggests, is an act that extends beyond itself into the minds of those who experience it, then terror is *epistemological violence*. Unlike other forms of violence, terror demands that the victim perform a kind of reality testing[9] on its own matrix of everydayness that did not previously include the negativity of the event within its index of *possibilities*. (*This can't be real*.) Borrowing from Alain Badiou's structural conception of the Event, I would like to suggest that the psychological violence of terrorism derives from the idea that it *demands* the victim "count" as a new reality, a new *situation*.[10] In this schema, terror then might be seen as that which is predicated as *impossible* from within what Badiou terms the *encyclopedia of the situation* (that of which we *can* speak, name, *count*).[11] For Badiou, the Event is the inauguration of the New, the multiplication of the multiple, a *becoming*. Terror seems to function as the introduction of a "new" thing, a change that cannot be denied, no matter how much the subject wishes to eject it from her epistemological "situation." This is of course why most subjective, intentional acts of violence are not terrorism, because not all acts of violence include an intentional manipulation of the objective *reality* of the victims.[12] Bank robberies and murders,

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[7] Hoffman, 41.
[8] Hoffman, 42.
[9] See "A Metapsychological Supplement to the Theory of Dreams." (1917) *SE*, 14: 217-235.
[10] Badiou also emphasizes that therein also lies its revolutionary force. See *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil*. Trans. Peter Hallward. (London: Verso, 2002).
[11] Alain Badiou, *Being and Event*. Trans. Oliver Feltham. (London: Continuum, 2005), 506.
[12] "The criminal may of course use some short-term act of violence to "terrorize" his victim, such as waving a gun in the face of a bank clerk during a robbery in order to ensure the clerk's expeditious compliance. In these instances, however, the bank robber is conveying no "message" (political or otherwise) through his act of violence beyond

however horrific for the victims themselves, do not multiply and proliferate as possibilities for those altogether elsewhere. In this sense, bank robberies and murders fall under the category of the *actual*, whereas terror always occupies a *virtual* space, as a possibility, a threat, a "fear without the apprehension of why or what."

Terror, as Derrida notes, is always caught up in the "know-how of the making-known" [*le savoir-faire de faire-savoir*] of political violence: "In all cases it has to do with knowing how to cause fear, knowing to terrorize by making known. And this terror, on both sides of the front, is undeniably effective, real, concrete, even if this concrete affectivity overflows the presence of the present toward a past or future of the trauma, which is never saturated with presence."[13] The dissemination of the event has the effect of delocalizing its causes and making it *possible* in other places/for other subjects: the pure virtual of the Event is portable and reproducible. The *know-how to make-known* entails an expert knowledge of local conditions and variables that will more quickly and efficiently transmit the mimetic energy of panic and confusion by "having at one's disposal the total archive, both public and nonpublic, of the totality of the event, of all making-known in an exhaustive making-known."[14] Epistemological manipulation, then, relies on some prior knowledge of the epistemological *habitus* of the victim(s): in other words, an attack is intensified by an indexical overlap onto their "official" reality. For early moderns, the maximization of symbolic affect is intensified through the analogical relationship between ideas and objects, a sympathy between varying spheres of knowledge that create epistemological hybrids: maximizing terror, then, entails a manipulation of the connections between heterogeneous systems, a process that will either help or hinder the proliferation of the event,

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facilitating the rapid handing over of his "loot." The criminal's act therefore is not meant to have any effect reaching beyond either the incident itself or the immediate victim." Hoffman, 42.

[13] *The Beast and the Sovereign*. Vol. 1. Trans. Geoffrey Bennington. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009). 36-9.

[14] Ibid. 38.

depending on how those system dynamics (cor)respond to the initial act. In this sense, terror is always an engagement with the axiomatic "archive" of those who are attacked. Without this vital overlap, the event may simply be absorbed into a new, yet "countable" reality of the victim. Horror and panic of are products of this index that terror creates: the idea that I am being targeted and that repetitions, and consequently, *safety*, is crumbling around me. The index grows as the subject paranoiacally attaches significance to arbitrary objects around him, thus creating a milieu of panic and dread, an entirely hostile regime of signs wherein everything will come to *signify significantly*: a sick cow, a man wheeling barrels into cellar, an old woman crossing herself on her knees in the middle of a crowded street.

As we shall see in the second chapter, early modern terror also relies upon the reproduction of local fears onto the body politic, but also upon the occult economy that operators within small communities participated in as conduits of local data regarding the relationships and activities of their clients and neighbors. This professionalism afforded an operator the chance to, either intentionally or unintentionally, participate in feedback loops that could, eventually, develop into a mode of control depending on the degree to which the consultations were reflexive and to what extend the operator wished to involve themselves, at-a-distance, in the personal and commercial affairs of the people they advised. The following chapters, then, will focus on how these local agents generated varying levels of control over their clients and/or victims. This rendering will allow us to explicate the thesis that terror is an epistemological problem for the early modern subject and that the alternate realities generated through cursing, astrology, and prophecy provided both professional operators, but also the elderly and downtrodden with a set of means by which to mount some modicum of resistance within what was becoming an increasingly atomized society. In the chapter that follows, we will begin with a

group of people who embody this latter category and attempt to situate their resistance within an axiological space that will become the medium of their epistemological violence: the English agrarian *topos*.

III. AGRARIAN TERROR AND THE ENCLOSURE OF THE ENCLOSURE

Topos and Structure

Social stratification in early modern England corresponded to each stratum's relation to the transhumance out of which it emerged and how each stratum came to circulate the energy available to it. *Striated* rural space demarcated zones of homogenized production (plowed soil, pastures), as opposed to *smooth*, heterogeneous spaces of movement and fluctuation (the commons). As Deleuze and Guattari write, "[i]n striated space, one closes off a surface and "allocates" it according to determinate intervals, assigned breaks; in the smooth, one "distributes" oneself in an open space, according to the frequencies and in the course of one's crossings[.]"[15] This fluid topography becomes increasingly hierarchical as the social strata intensify their connections to these spaces by occupying/counting them.[16] Consequently, "*it is the town that invents agriculture*: it is through the actions of the town that the farmers and their striated space are superposed upon the cultivators operating in a smooth space (the transhumant cultivator, half-sedentary or already completely sedentary)."[17] The striated spaces of field and pasture are enclosed, marked, and allocated, then, towards a homogenized production that, in

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[15] *A Thousand Plateaus,* 481.
[16] Ibid. 362.
[17] Ibid. 481.

England, was initially based on subsistence farming and its attendant markets wherein surpluses could be sold for profit. Eventually, the smooth space of the commons and the wastes comes to resist circumscription by the enclosure process that continually *counts* and distributes *right* across a closed system of profit-based production directed towards foreign markets: in turn, the manorial system (both juridical and topographical) which granted *right* to common holdings, begins to erode in the 14th century as the *nomos* of the land is axiomatically re-assigned a non-local use-value. Enclosure and the striation of smooth space intensifies throughout the fourteenth-century as the ovine population of England becomes attached to Edward III's war-machine in the late 1360's (*á France*) via "taxes *in* wool and taxes *on* wool"[18] – all of this occurring simultaneously as England begins to emerge as a competitor with the wool monopoly in Flanders.[19] (Edward's reign, we might note, saw the largest debasement of coinage in the English Middle Ages, a hyperinflation that led to massive levels of hoarding[20]). If land use constitutes a kind of *code* between landowners and tenants, then the wool trade effectively overwrote manorial space, the ancient system of holdings that guaranteed right to the commons and wastes.

As post-plague populations recovered in the 15th and 16th centuries, land usage became more and more politicized as the competition over smooth space increased, thereby "undermin[ing] traditional concepts of landholding within a moral economy."[21] In *Utopia*, Thomas More famously frames the territorial battle over smooth space in *consumptive* terms by which the *nomos* of the land comes to be understood as a *commercial appetite* that overwrites land codes (the "moral economy"). Henry VIII's project to establish a state-controlled,

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[18] Eileen Power, *The Wool Trade in English Medieval History*. (Oxford: University Press, 1941), 23.
[19] See T. H. Lloyd, *The English Wool Trade in the Middle Ages*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1977, 99-176.
[20] Diana Wood, *Medieval Economic Thought*. (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2002), 123.
[21] McRae, *Godspeed the Plough*, 43

"protestant" England would further complicate agrarian politics by opening up what had once been privately-held Catholic lands to the gentry, which simultaneously overwrote religious *and* land codes, defaulting massive tracts of land to the upper strata that would continue to intensify its relatively late entry into foreign markets and the capital they generated. It is for this reason that More deliberately frames the language of enclosure in the language of *insurrection*, noting that the herbivorous ovine, "which are naturally mild, and easily kept in *order*"[22] are, in a sense, rebelling against the humans, and thereby "eating" them: the wool market, for More, is getting out of hand, upsetting the social fabric to the degree that it simulates a political rebellion. Enclosure and engrossing displaces and contracts human energy and resources, such that "one shepherd can look after a flock which will stock an extent of ground that would require many hands if it were to be ploughed and reaped."[23] As post-feudal subjects, the lower strata saw an algebraic equilibrium between land area and labor, whereas proto-capitalist landowners sought to *subtract* the population out of the land by enclosing, engrossing, racking rent, and lowering wages: *disequilibriums* that generate surplus-value. These imbalances not only transform the market, but also the social strata themselves, their organic *haecceity*, the "this-ness" that ties any particular stratum to the land whose energies it merges with and *e*merges from in transhumant and market evolution *qua* identity.

The socioeconomic consequences of the generation of surplus-value often led to unrest. Popular reactions to agrarian reorganization projects could be violent, but, as Roger B. Manning notes, they were mostly small-scale affairs, generally involving between ten to 30 persons.[24] Attacks against landowners consisted mainly of the destruction of hedges and other property

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[22] More, *Utopia* (1516).
[23] Ibid.
[24] *Village Revolts: Social Protest and Popular Disturbances in England, 1509-1640*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 55.

markers, but, as the data suggests, many of the attacks were also verbal, in the form of published letters and verses that attempted to "assert a claim to the exercise of use-right on wastes, commons, and woodland."[25] These small-scale riots and anti-enclosure movements remained local, for if the protests became synchronically organized across the countryside, the peasantry knew that they could potentially be charged with treason.[26] Furthermore, as McRae notes, agrarian complaint was failing to make the dent it once had because the lower orders had evolved into a multiplicity of categories that distorted any simple binary (land/landless), thus complicating the nature of complaint and who it represented.[27] Agrarian complaint also became disconnected from the Catholic and early Tudor support it received in sermons against "covetousness": the influx of Calvinist theology undermined Edwardian notions of the "commonweal," focusing on the village as an enclave of individual *believers* and not as a community of believing producers.[28] Village-level socio-theological organization often depicted the marginalia of village life as "ungodly,"[29] thus serving both to atomize and subdivide the community on the basis of its productive and devotional capacities (especially post-1558). Furthermore, since an appeal to the church is now an automatically an appeal to the state, it is as if, as Manning suggests, an anxiety emerges in the village strata as to whom complaint should appeal *to*. Thomas More had gone so far to suggest that God himself "punished the avarice of owners by a rot among the sheep."[30] His notion of divine intervention, however, becomes all the more important as we explore the rise of socially aberrant behavior within the village milieu, as I will contend that this impasse to local complaint forced agrarian discontent to take alternate

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[25] Ibid. 57
[26] Ibid. 81
[27] McRae, 46-7.
[28] Ibid. 58-79.
[29] Ibid. 70
[30] More, ibid.

forms that relied on the semiotic potential of the land itself as a medium for their complaints. In

this sense, *malefica* emerge parallel to the atomization the Max Weber, Keith Thomas and others

identify as the product of the erosion of medieval *charitas* and the movement of religious

experience out of an organized communal space and into the King James Bible on the kitchen

table.[31]

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[31] See Max Weber, *The Spirit of Capitalism and the Protestant Work Ethic*. Trans. Talcott Parsons. (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1958), 35-46, *passim*; Keith Thomas. *Religion and the Decline of Magic*. (New York: Penguin, 1971), 58-89; 103. Consider also a recent assessment of this logic of atomization by a group of students who were arrested in France for an alleged plot to sabotage overhead electric lines on the French train system : "Reebok's…'I AM WHAT I AM,' then, is not simply a lie, a simple advertising campaign, but a *military* campaign, a war cry directed against everything that exists *between* beings, against everything that circulates indistinctly, everything that invisible links them, everything that prevents complete isolation, against everything that makes us *exist*, and ensures that the whole world doesn't everywhere have the look and feel of a highway, an amusement park or a new town: pure boredom, passionless but well-ordered, empty, frozen space, where nothing moves apart from registered bodies, molecular automobiles and ideal communities." The Invisible Committee, *The Coming Insurrection*. (New York: Semiotext(e), 2008) 32-3.

In George Gifford's *A Dialogue Concerning Witches and Witchcraft* (a dialogue that Alan Macfarlane describes as a work of 16th century anthropology[32]), he attempts to reconcile the desire to seek out those whom he claims were fraudulent occult professionals with the idea that the devil was able to operate through individuals, a sort of mixed skeptical view that allowed for the presence of evil, albeit divorced from any human agency. The treatise, however, does give us a very clear initial view of what local occult operations (including *malefica*) had the capacity to generate within local epistemologies that were not as certain as Gifford of their unreality. In the opening pages, the farmer Samuel states to his friend Daniel,

> In good sooth, I may tell it to you as to my friend, when I goe but into my closes, I am
> afraid, for I see nowe and then a Hare; which my conscience giueth me is a witch, or
> some witches sprite, shee stareth so vppon me. *And* sometime I see an vgly weasel runne
> through my yard, *and* there is a foule great catte sometimes in my Barne, which I haue no
> liking vnto."[33]

In this passage, the farmer explicitly links his fear of *malefica* to the animal population of his "closes." Samuel is unsure whether or not he has been bewitched and the dialogue that follows is an attempt on Daniel's part (and, presumably, Gifford's) to convince him that he is not a victim of bewitchment, but that the "deuill hath bewitched [his] minde."[34] Regardless of the ontological truth-value of Samuel's fear, his narration is composed around a phenomenological series (*"and"…"and"…*) of objects that emerge as intensities, and thus fill him with fear and paranoia

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[32] See "A Tudor Anthropologist: George Gifford's Discourse and Dialogue." in *The Damned Art: Essays in the Literature of Witchcraft.* Ed. Sidney Angelo. (New York: Routledge, 1977), 140-155.
[33] *A Dialogue Concerning Witches and Witchcraft* (1594), 10. [italics mine]
[34] Ibid. 5.

over the state of his land, buildings, and enclosures. Samuel's relation of his fear of animals is significant to the study of English *malefica* because agrarian terror in England is less a matter of collective ritual (the sabbat being primarily a Continental affair) than a kind of belligerence that relies on the non-human to generate semiotic violence. In this sense, the *and's* of his fear are a proliferation within his mind (which, to put it in psychoanalytic terms, must be confessed to the big Other *qua* Gifford). The notion of the "familiar" indexes these affects with the malefactor, thereby "enclosing the enclosure," *populating* it with a set of misrecognitions, a series arbitrary signs that are no longer arbitrary (hare, weasel, cat) because they are now potentially attached to someone's *will*. The "intentionality" of the situation Samuel finds himself in distorts his relation to the environment, skewing it such that it seems to have a kind of consciousness (notably in how the hare "stares" at him).[35] Animal surveillance engenders a sort of ecological paranoia by which the farmer comes to look at the *oikos* awry, seeing the black holes of subject-positions crop up all around him. The use of the *familiar* distorts the boundaries between human and non-human animals, inscribing an inwardness to the opaque animal-Other that Aristotelian and Biblical conceptions do not provide for. The use of the familiar, then, is an attack on the everyday *relations* between humans and animals, the anthropocentrism that shielded humans against the mental realities of the dogs, cats, cows, and sheep that populated the agrarian early modern epistemological *habitus*.[36]

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[35] "The face constructs the wall that the signifier needs in order to bounce off of; it constitutes the wall of the signifier, the frame or screen. The face digs the hole that subjectification needs in order to break through; it constitutes the black hole of subjectivity as consciousness or passion, the camera, the third eye." Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus*: *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Trans. Brian Massumi. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987). 168.

[36] To borrow a concept from Gilles Deleuze, the familiar is a weapon of *pure difference*: a difference between two differences. The familiar creates a difference *between*: 1) the difference between how animals and humans are *typically* related and; 2) the difference between how they come to be related in the situation that *malefica* produce. See *Difference and Repetition*. Trans. Paul Patton. (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1994).

Who then is the agent within this structure and how have they come to *operate* this space? As I will stress throughout this inquiry, power within fields (both literal and figurative) comes to be constituted by subjects who are engaged with dynamic systems – both mystical and the economic – an occult economy that uses the ready at hand to create varying effects within neighborhoods, towns (and, as we shall see in chapter two, even nations). As much of the literature on witchcraft suggests, the marginal figures of a society were grouped into a nebulous nomenclature that made it difficult to separate professional operators from quacks, fortune tellers, and the disciples of Satan as they all were interacting within a structure that employed unstable categories with regard to the identity of Antichrist and the hotly-debated value of superstition and magic. As is often noted, this mental no-man's land generated the environment wherein witchcraft accusations and paranoia over bewitchment developed, but I would like to examine this space as a kind of epistemological screen onto which images and intensities can be projected as effects that serve to sever empirical reality from the virtual reality that informs it. In this sense, prophecy, image-magic, and bewitchment can serve to establish *simulations* in the sense that Baudrillard uses the term to describe a "fake" holdup in *Simulacra and Simulation*:

> Organize a fake holdup. Verify that your weapons are harmless, and take the most
> trustworthy hostage, so that no human life will be in danger (or one lapses into the
> criminal). Demand a ransom, and make it so that the operation creates as much
> commotion as possible – in short, remain close to the 'truth,' in order to test the reaction
> of the apparatus to a perfect simulacrum. You won't be able to do it: the network of
> artificial signs will become inextricably mixed up with real elements (a policeman will
> really fire on sight; a client of the bank will faint and die of a heart attack; one will
> actually pay you the phony ransom), in short, you will immediately find yourself once

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again, without wishing it, in the real, one of whose functions is precisely to devour any

attempt at simulation, to reduce everything to the real – that is, to the established order

itself, well before institutions and justice come into play. [37]

Prophecy and cursing, for our purposes, will come to generate simulations within fields of

arbitrary objects. These practices will coalesce, in this study, into a set of tactics that become

available to the subject as a resistant force to someone who has wronged them. In short, given

this rendering of the *field*, we might say that the farmer is "terror'd"[38] by a virtual reality that

relies on local fears and superstitions as the fuel for the epistemological fire. The use of mostly

domestic animals (dogs, cats, rats, frogs) also speaks to a process of *bricolage*[39] by which the

operator utilizes the ubiquity (and, therefore, *invisibility*) of those domestic animals to disrupt the

agrarian milieu with a simulation that becomes real via a delivery system such as cursing or

prophecy. Maleficent acts become *real* because they are installed within the economy of occult

beliefs surrounding the control of phantasmic forces, which, in turn, serializes them into a chain

of everyday signifiers that have come to constitute the subject's epistemological moorings –

malefica, in this sense, create terror by soliciting the world of signs rain down upon a victim

(*"and…the cat…and…the fox…and…"*). Consequently, the victims in many of the late-

Tudor/early-Stuart witchcraft treatises are much like Baudrillard's bank client having a heart

attack in the middle of the *simulated* act of terror: as Thomas Cooper puts it, "our imaginations

may hurt ourselves" [40] due to the fact that, phenomenologically, the lived experience of fear does

not place a premium on any objective correlation to empirical reality. Superstition and analogical

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[37] "Jean Baudrillard. *Simulacra and Simulation*. Trans. Shelia Faria Glaser. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), 20.
[38] See note 5.
[39] "The first aspect of bricolage is thus to construct a system of paradigms with the fragments of syntagmatic chains." Claude Levi-Strauss. *The Savage Mind*. (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1966), 150. The processes of bewitching and cursing rely precisely on the disruption of the syntagmatic chains via the introduction of paradigmatic substitutions (cats, dogs, frogs) that are inserted into the *habitus* of the agrarian "situation."
[40] Thomas Cooper, *Mystery of Witchcraft* (1617), 160.

reasoning only exacerbate these effects by, in turn, *splicing* the victim's epistemological reality

into a series of objects that have now been *bewitched*. Interestingly, early modern writers make

use of a botanical metaphor to describe this process of tampering with the *habitus* of everyday

images by describing witches as those who "experiment life" through the use of "wicked

grafts."[41] To use a film metaphor, these "grafts" are like frames that inserted into the reel of

reality by which the operator of a simulation inserts a semiotic catalyst (such as a curse or a

prophecy) into the agrarian economy of signs and thus enables her to essentially hijack causality

itself in a world that lacked the scientific knowledge by which to explain the non-connection

between the utterance of a malediction and its apparent actualization. This brings us to our initial

discussion of cursing.

Although cursing in England and France was often associated with ancient pagan

incantations, it has a brief, but very interesting set of liturgical roots whereby the 11th century

Church was able to raise a "clamor" against the enemies of Christ, notably in the Benedictine

abbeys that became associated with Cluny, where the roots of the tactic have been discovered.[42] I

am employing this liturgical model because it has its history blurs the lines between a religious

action and a public protest, but also because it more than likely proliferated into England in the

during the 11th century – it is difficult to gauge their popularity in England, as Catholic records

become problematic after the 1530's, however, records of clamors survived in St. Germans,

Winchester, and Rochester.[43] The clamor was originally a juridical appeal that evolved between

the eighth and eleventh centuries into a system of protest that moved out of the Visigoth courts

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[41] Richard Galis. *A brief treatis containing the most strange and horrible cruelty of Elizabeth Stile alias Rockingham and her confederates, executed at Abingdon, upon R. Galis* (1579), 12.

[42] See Lester K. Little. *Benedictine Maledictions: Liturgical Cursing in Romanesque France*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993).

[43] Ibid. 49.

and into the churches.[44] Some liturgical clamors began to include curses, or maledictory

formulas against violations of church property: they began to become increasingly popular in the

11th century in "that part of the continent hardest hit by Viking invasions and most characterized

by the devolution of political authority to the level of local strongmen."[45] (The reader might note

the congruities between this structural model and the use of prophecy in *Macbeth*, below.) As

Little notes, however, cursing was often relegated to the poor or those who had taken vows of

poverty, a privilege that extended to early modern England as it was available as an exo-

liturgical device whereby the powerless seek protection in times of crisis.[46]

In early modern England, cursing comes to rely on what we will call the "state of the

situation," a term I am borrowing from Alain Badiou which defines as the *state* which "secures

and completes the plenitude of the situation."[47] There are no holes in the state of the situation as

it is completely *countable* (what Badiou calls the "count-as-one"). That which is *un*countable, or

cannot be included with any particular state, then, falls under the genus of the Event, as that

which appears as the New which is immediately coupled to the subject's *fidelity* to that Event.

i.e. the subject will be born out of his commitment to that change within the structure of the

situation. In the case of a farmer, the land and the livestock are subject to the maladies that any

other system is heir to: they are, in a sense, economic intensities within the field, specifically

because they are property and are therefore indexed to the owner/farmer (whose living depends

on the health of said animals, etc.). Sickness, lameness, death, and blight are the four major

effects that contribute to an operating system whereby a curser can index animals and properties,

with a relatively high probability of success, to their own vitriol and thereby mark those animals

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[44] Ibid. 17-9.
[45] Ibid. 50.
[46] Ibid. 51.
[47] *Being and Event*, 522.

as targets within the mind of the victim. The probability of successful targeting is, of course,

helped or hindered by the farmer's relation to his property, as negligent farmers would prove to

be easier targets. The wager against a neighbor's misfortune allows the curser to, in a sense,

translate a field of arbitrary signs into an epistemological minefield. The curse *takes* when the

husbandman attaches the field of signifiers to the "barbarous" words of the curse,[48] thereby

creating the Event of the curse itself, the New that the curser forces the victim to *count-as-one*,

as epistemologically *real*. This retooling of epistemic reality couples the vindictive desires of the

aggressor with the subsequent (re)actions of the victim, as it blurs the line between correlation

and causality. Here's how this almost invariably plays out in the literature: after a falling-out

with a hostile neighbor, a farmer returns home to a field of signs that have been now been

overcoded by a curse. In a kind of terrifying epiphany, he sees that one of his cows is sick and

thereby transposes the semiotics of the curse onto the ecology of signs that had been originally

available to the curser *qua* neighbor. This is precisely the *savoir-faire* of *malefica* themselves:

they are based on a previously-held, neighborly knowledge of the victim, a set of targets that the

curser can "bet against": a chronically sick animal or child, a maid that is inept at churning

butter, a farmer whose husbandry is sub-par.

Badiou's concept of *counting* certainly also has socioeconomic implications and herein

lies the connection to the socioeconomic problems of enclosure and engrossing as these dual

processes of accumulation dissolve some surpluses (commons, wastes, fens, marshes) while

creating other surpluses within the labor market (the unemployed/underemployed: vagabonds,

beggars, "masterless men"). This appropriation of surplus energy for private means typically

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[48] Thomas Cooper, *Mystery of Witchcraft* (1617), 160.

demanded the freeing up of an equal amount of arable pasture[49], and indeed, in many cases of

agrarian unrest, the peasantry became rebellious when the commons were enclosed

permanently[50] – a process that fixed the productive capacities of a piece of land such that a larger

surplus could be generated *qua* profit by cutting and consolidating labor. If depopulating

enclosures, then, were driven in part by a bet on a commodity future (rising grain or wool

prices), then attacks on landowners mirrored that bet as the curse is placed in a "market" of

possible *futures* (sick cow, mildewed grain) that will guarantee a profitable revenge. Put in

Badiou's terms, if the enclosing landowner seeks to "count-as-one" the state of his local agrarian

situation (*qua* "assets") against a future price that will be guaranteed in the market, then the

curser intensifies this logic, hoping that the landowner will, in turn, count-as-one the surplus that

the curse grafts into the situation: *count the broken plow, count the ruined corn, the sick child,*

the lame cow, the semiotic claustrophobia that the curse generates by *enclosing* the agrarian

matrix in terrifying simulation.[51]

The *invisibility* of the curse is also, on a certain level, the obverse of the "vnperceiued,

vnpunished"[52] legal aporia surrounding black market agrarian transactions, as the official land

statutes banned enclosure and engrossment as a *national* policy, notably in 1593, at the outset of

four years of continual bad harvests. However, anti-enclosure regulations were only enforced in

certain regions: for instance, the statutes of 1536 were an attempt to actually enforce earlier

Tudor anti-enclosure legislation, but even then the statues were only widely enforced in the north

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[49] "Agricultural Change: Policy and Practice 1500-1750." Ed. Joan Thirsk. *Chapters from the Agrarian History of England and Wales*. Vol 3. Gen. Ed. Joan Thirsk. (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1990), 63.
[50] Ibid. 64.
[51] "It is the tactic of the terrorist model to bring about an excess of reality, and have the system collapse beneath the excess of reality." *The Sprit of Terrorism*. Trans. Chris Turner. (London: Verso, 2003), 18.
[52] Thomas Adams, *The happiness of the church* (1619), 207.

and the west.[53] We see the realities of this juridical pell-mell (and the violent reactions to it) in the play *Arden of Faversham* (1592), in which Dick Reede, a former tenant who has subsequently taken to the seas after his rent was racked, curses Arden, his landlord. (Note also that Arden has acquired all of the local abbey properties, swindling neighboring landowners out of their shares.) Reede begs Arden to reconsider the situation, but Arden is unwilling to negotiate. With his "clamorous impeaching tongue," (xiii. 22) Reede curses the cheating landowner with a barrage of imprecations against his body, family, land, friendships, future endeavors, capacity to father children, and sanity (30-38). Arden shrugs the curses off, claiming that they are unfounded ("like arrows shot upright," 40). Although this instance of cursing is not (necessarily) the product of an association with occult practices, it gives us a substantial structural base by which to read other curses, which, in many cases, were a last-ditch effort to gain the upper-hand on a neighbor.

A similar tactic is employed in the broadside ballad, "A Lanthorne for Landlords" (1630), where we encounter a similar household economy in which a husband has been displaced (and subsequently killed, fighting in Ireland), leaving a wife and children to fend for themselves. The landlord turns the woman out, deprives her of her belongings to satisfy the back rent, and forces her and the children "by nights in streets to rest." The widow, before leaving, asks the landlord for an explanation (her husband was fighting for the landlord's "cause") and then curses him, clamoring,

O God reuenge a widdowes wrong,

That all the world may know,

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[53] "Agricultural Change: Policy and Practice 1500-1750." Ed. Joan Thirsk. *Chapters from the Agrarian History of England and Wales*. Vol 3. Gen. Ed. Joan Thirsk. (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1990), 72.

How you haue forst a Soldiers wife

a begging for to goe.

As the ballad continues, however, the widow avoids towns and villages, refusing to beg, and tries to live in the fields, meadows, and woods (presumably common areas) until her two boys wander off and die from exposure. She later finds their bodies while reaping "with other labouring men." The onlookers transport her back to Lincoln to prosecute the landlord, but, it turns out that God's "Iudgment" has beat them there, burning down the landlord's barn (in which he stores grain until famines arise so as to sell his corn at a higher price). The landlord's wife burns for witchcraft,[54] and his two elder sons are hung as murderers; his youngest son is executed for beastiality and the farmer is torn apart by mastiffs; the farmer's father subsequently drowns himself in a stream that flows down the street at hearing of his son's death. It is obvious in texts such as these that the curse secures virtual connections between families and neighbors and that the clamor raised by the curser causes utter destruction to the "seed" of the offending family, an *anti*-fertility ritual. Furthermore, the juridical appeal becomes coupled to a divine judgment that the curse seems to have enacted.

How then do these imprecations during desperate times become indexed and intensified under the signifier "witch"? This is important because "witch" often marks a border between permissible and non-permissible behavior on the part of a neighbor. In many cases the juridical tipping point between *old, poor woman* and *witch* was dialectical, a quantity-becoming-quality whereby repetition and the interconnections between neighbors served to create a critical mass as the curser saw returns (= revenge) on her bets: as Keith Thomas "a reputation for *successful*

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[54] An embellishment, to be certain, for Anne Askew is the only woman recorded to have received that punishment in England.

cursing could easily lead to a formal charge of witchcraft."[55] It is interesting, then, to note that

this critical mass parallels the politics of local riot, as an overly-successful riot could result in a

formal charge of treason.[56] How then does the literature address the relation between the *nomos*

of cursing and the nebulous social space in which it is intensified by proliferation through a local

population?

Rowley, Dekker, and Ford's *The Witch of Edmonton* (1621) provides an excellent case

study from which we can develop a schema of how cursing and *malefica* work in real-time. It

also allows us to witness the social construction of the haecceity that is "witch" by allowing us to

view both the problematic social relations that produce what Monica Wilson calls the "socially

standardized nightmare"[57] that witchcraft accusations solidify within a cultural milieu that

associates entropy with malevolent forces. The play itself contains a plot and two subplots of

which the eponymous witch occupies a space within one of the latter. In the main plot, we are

presented with the marital dilemma surrounding Frank Thorney, who over the course of the play

will commit bigamy and murder, essentially, in order to rob Peter to pay Paul. The main plot,

however, establishes a structure wherein the accusation of witchcraft leveled at Mother Sawyer

comes, in my reading, to be enunciated. The play is saturated by a sense of disorganization that

has been brought about by the upper-orders' sexual proclivities with regards to servants and

financial issues regarding land tenures. The latter, for our purposes, will be more helpful in that

they will help to elucidate the economic structures that have caused social tension over the

inflating price of land itself. The tenuous relationship between land and security is made explicit

throughout the text, as Frank laments the idea that his children will grow up in "the misery of

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[55] *Religion and the Decline of Magic,* 610.
[56] *Village Revolts*, 81.
[57] Monica Wilson, "Witchcraft Beliefs and Social Structure," *The Journal of American Sociology*. Vol. LVI. No. 4: 313.

beggary and want" (I.i.18)[58] The language that the down and out upper-orders use specifically

indexes their misfortune to an abstract "curse," as both Frank and his downtrodden father, Old

Thorney, use the word to indicate the perpetuity of their financial difficulties (Frank in I.i.17;

Old Thorney in I.ii.160). As is typical of many small landholders during this period, Old

Thorney has apparently mortgaged his land in an effort to save the farm, a bet that he is hoping

will be made good through his son's marriage to another (wealthy) landowner's daughter – this

is problematic, of course, because Frank has already married a servant girl he falsely believes he

has impregnated. To conclude this summarization, the play establishes a tone that sets the stage

for the conflict that will set in motion the subplot involving Mother Sawyer.

The "witch" of Edmonton appears at the beginning of the second act, lamenting how she

has been structurated as witch-figure within the local community. Her speech establishes a

number of key concerns as to how her *quoddity* ("that"-ness) comes to generate a *haecceity* that

she is visibly disturbed by how she has been structurated as an abject other within the

neighborhood. I will quote the speech in its entirety:

> And why on me? Why should the envious world
>
> Throw all their scandalous malice upon me?
>
> 'Cause I am poor, deformed and ignorant,
>
> And like a bow buckled and bent together
>
> By some more strong in mischiefs than myself,
>
> Must I for that be made a common sink
>
> For all the filth and rubbish of men's tongues
>
> To fall and run into? Some call me witch,

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[58] All references to the play are from *Three Jacobean Witchcraft Plays: The Tragedy of Sophonisba, The Witch, The Witch of Edmonton*. Ed. Peter Corbin and Douglas Sedge. (Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 1986), 143-209.

And, being ignorant of myself, they go

About to teach me how to be one, urging

That my bad tongue, by their bad usage made so,

Forspeaks their cattle, doth bewitch their corn,

Themselves, their servants and their babes at nurse (II.i.1-13)

Sawyer's speech is one of the most anthropologically reflexive literary renderings how the witch-function becomes generated as she seems to be acutely aware of how her appearance and actions both render her as abject, but also, and more importantly, how the witch-ness requires a circular logic whereby the community's desire for her to become-"common sink" (6) is parallel to their "bad usage" (11) of her, which, in turn, causes her to use her "bad tongue" in such a way that they come to validate her status as a "common sink" for any particular misfortune they might have. What is also particularly interesting for our purposes here is the use of the term "common sink." Since *sink* can refer to lowlands or marsh, and much of the land that was enclosed during the period was comprised of common wastes (which included lowlands), the geographical wastes have anthropomorphized into "poor, deformed, and ignorant" (3) women. In a disturbing way, elderly women within early modern communities absorbed the function of the wastes in the moment they were kicked off of them, in that common areas like the wastes could no longer be relied on for their abject that-ness as they were slowly enclosed and "improved". At the level of the local community, it is as if Sawyer comes to represent the land that the gentry around her is losing and the play operates by painting her with the financial "curses" that their own "bad usage" has led them to. Immediately following this speech, however, the phenomena that she has just described play themselves out in the present as Old Banks, a local farmer immediately calls her a witch and demands that she vacate the premises on which she had been

gathering "a few rotten sticks" (20) to warm herself. Rights of estover diminished in tandem with the enclosure of commons and wastes, areas that the poor relied on as a shared, renewable resource. The dynamics of the curse-function that Sawyer employs in the next few lines has a dual structure, which is remarkable as it initially correlates the physical with the "meta" physical – she wishes that the sticks he makes her drop would "cross [his] throat, [his] bowels, [his] maw, [his] midriff" (25) – and then, after he begins to actually beat her, the pain is reflexively transferred into the virtual via an official curse – "Now thy bones ache, thy joints cramp, and convulsions stretch and crack thy sinews! (27-9). In this sense, her curse comes to substitute for the physical injuries she immanently desires would befall her "adversary" (16). This substitution was, we should add, a well known dynamic: as Richard Younge writes in 1648, "They curse us because they cannot be suffered to kill us."[59]

In the lines leading up to Old Banks' entrance, however, she has described the dynamic between what the community wants and what she comes to fulfill for them as she has become a social depository for their own financial angst – a "credit" (15) that she must assent to. In this vein, one of the most fascinating sequences in the play occurs when Sawyer is brought before the Justice to account for her role in what the public will have deemed a socially standardized nightmare, as it becomes obvious that Sawyer is acutely aware of how culturally-codified economic mechanisms rely on an occult-like conversion of public resources into private capital. When the Justice asks her if she is a witch, she deftly asks, "Who is not?" (103). Sawyer is explicit about this as the Justice questions the evil nature of her "work" (109). She argues that the examples she gives him of sinful courtly relations (104-9) are certainly worse than the signifier he is attempting to attach to her. But the most striking answer she gives helps to elucidate modes of accumulation that are products of other women's greedy desires:

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[59] Quoted in *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 608.

These by enchantments can turn whole lordships change

To trunks of rich attire, turn ploughs and teams

To Flanders mares and coaches, and huge trains

Of servitors to a French butterfly (111-14)

In these lines, Sawyer targets massive sell-offs of property (depopulation), the conversion of labor into entertainment and finery, and finally, what we might identify as the post-feudal contraction of ancient retainership into a Malvolio or an Oswald. In this sense, she attempts to illustrate how accumulative processes – and not necessarily the surplus of old women in a community – contribute to the economic conversion of labor into materialism and malaise.

Returning to the interactions with the farmer, Sawyer eventually assents to a familiar's offer to blast Old Banks' corn and kill his cattle (which, presumably, he does sometime after his exit in line 180). As we see in the opening of the fourth act, Sawyer's curses have worked by proxy, as Banks complains that his horse's case of glanders is a product of Sawyer's *malefica*. For Banks and his small audience, the "bad tongue" that his "bad usage" has engendered has come back to them. In the scene, we are able to see the curse-function proliferate through the community as various countrymen corral their misfortunes under the signifier "witch." One man attributes his wife's infidelity to the curse while another suggest that Sawyer is responsible for the "fall" of their cattle, wives, daughters, and maidservants. The third countryman's conclusion to this litany, however, solidifies the fear of the elderly that was exacerbated during times of dearth and economic downturn, as he describes her as a "beast…suffered to graze among us" (14). Of course, the line echoes Exodus 22:18 ("Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live"), but it also establishes her as both a domesticated animal that consumes public resources ("among us"). As we will see in the following chapter in our discussion of the Porter, there was a massive public

outcry at the beginning of the 17th century over local consumption and the fear that the caloric

economy was a zero-sum game. In this light, the townspeople's desire to burn her reflects a fear

that consumption of resources by at-risk individuals (which included sailors on dangerous

voyages) were simply an expenditure of food. [60] Both Sawyer's becoming-animal and the terror

that lies at the heart of these zero-sum games, however, finds an odd corollary in the play when

Old Banks, apparently possessed by the signifiers that have been hurled upon him, publicly

admits to having had perverse relations with his dun cow, as he is compelled to lift up her tail

and kiss her anus "ten times in an hour" (55). Is this the upper-limit of what a charge of

witchcraft can erase from the ledger of personal control over one's libidinal urges? If not, as the

public onlookers seem to suggest by their silence, then is Banks truly under her spell or is he

performing this as to illustrate the degree to which Sawyer is some sort of instrument of evil?

These is are difficult questions to answer, but what these scenes with the townspeople function to

illustrate is that one person's legitimate terror might become someone else's metaphysical patsy

for some sort of morally questionable action (cuckoldry, bad husbandry, etc.). Just as the curse

perverts relations between humans and animals, it also perverts relations between proprietor and

property, as the terror over created within the cursed early modern agrarian mind in many cases

transforms, reflexively, into violent reactions on the part of the landowner *against* his own

property. After a falling out with and subsequently cursing her neighbor, William Byatt,

Elizabeth Bennett caused such mental distress via the curse, that after the death of three of his

animals, Byatt attacked one of his own cows, beating it to death.[61] The same phenomenon,

coincidentally, occurs in Gifford's dialogue (from which the dun cow incident is lifted), as

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[60] See Thomas Mun, *A Discourse of Trade* (London: Nicholas Okes, 1621), 33; 37-8. Strangely, Mun also seems to suggest that sending "desperate and vnruly people" keeps crime down, by "purging" England of undesirables, as if their just desserts equate to being sent on voyages that he insists are "not so dangerous and mortall." See ibid.36-7.
[61] "Witches at St. Osyth." *Witchcraft in England, 1558-1618*. Ed. Barbara Rosen. (Amherst: Univ. of Massachusetts Press, 1969), 122.

Samuel's neighbors implore him to "burn something aliue, as a henne or a hogge"[62] to break a curse. One of Samuel's neighbors actually burns one of his pigs alive after he verifies that he has been bewitched by a familiar/cat.[63] As environmental terror, the curse seems to create a kind of environment of "collateral wrong[s]"[64] against the non-human population that gets caught up in its semiotic wake. What I must stress here, however, is that, for a subsistence farmer during a time of increasing inflation and rent, the self-destruction of one's own private property seems to be a virtually unimaginable act as it requires sabotaging one's income to end a what must have been a particularly horrific falling-out with a neighbor (who, had, apparently, already gotten the upper hand). Concordantly, the most disturbing instance of the terror in the play comes when Sawyer's revenge against her neighbor, Anne Ratcliffe, comes, quite literally, to a head as her victim appears on stage ("*mad*", as the stage directions tell us) spouting nonsense and gibberish, only to be carried off-stage where she subsequently "beat[s] out her own brains" (IV.i.210). It is only after this violent act that Sawyer is arrested and tried.

Economically, agrarian terror turns production into anti-production: by attacking both the landowner and the land, it constitutes an attack via *price manipulation* on the local and general economies of the state. As one German bishop put it in 1589, witches and cursers are "traitors to the Fatherland, because they secretly conspire, as experience shows, to destroy the wine harvest, rot the fruits and drive up prices of grain."[65] In this sense, *malefica* not only generate epistemological excesses, but also inflationary excesses as the loss of crops drives up grain prices as the combination of enclosure, bad harvests, and population growth only exacerbates the

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[62] Gifford, *Dialogue*, 21-22.
[63] Ibid. 34.
[64] A term that is congruent to our concept of "collateral damage." See Bochas, *Fall of Princes* (1554), VIII, xii. 183 b. Trans. John Lydgate of Bury (c. 1430). Quoted in "Collateral" *adj*. 2a. *OED*
[65] Behringer, Wolfgang. "Weather, Hunger and Fear: Origins of the European Witch-Hunts in Climate, Society, and Mentality." Trans. David Lederer. *The Witchcraft Reader*. Ed. Darren Oldridge. (London: Routledge, 2002), 176.

inflationary problem that land cursing presented to local economies (as Thomas Cooper puts it, witches "breed terror *and* inconvenience to men[66]"). The productivity of local economies is a grave issue for a country whose population faces the perpetual threat of caloric deficiency: to wish, then, the blighting of any particular parcel of land (as Sawyer does) is, virtually, to wish the death of one's neighbors. *Environmental* terror, in this sense, becomes a kind of eschatological attack on the local populations, as an attack on crops and animals has real economic effects within local markets, especially during periods like the mid-1590's when famine was severe and resulted in numerous cases of starvation.[67] To take this to its logical conclusion, malefactors could potentially become victims of their own curses: if they end up starving to death, they could potentially become *suicide cursers* that drag the village of economic apostates with them into the ensuing neighborhood famine. This suicidal element of the land curse is made explicit at the end of *The Witch of Edmonton*, when Sawyer, in the moments leading up to her demise seems to echo the events surrounding the Gunpowder Plot. In a state of utter atomization, having lost track of her familiar, she cries, "Could I run/Like a swift powder-mine beneath the world,/Up would I blow it all to find out thee,/Though I lay ruined in it" (V. i. 20-23). In this sense, the destruction of crops, livestock, indeed, the world itself, creates a moral vacuum in which the early modern environmental terrorist operates, as the collateral damage of an attack on a symbolically-charged target (e.g. enclosed farm) often results in collateral hurt done to the local market that a curser has yoked to her vitriol, a market that includes both landowners, but also subsistence farmers and other poor, old women. This moral ambiguity is essential to the construction of the witch-figure as potential terrorist as the collateral damage

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[66] *Mystery of Witchcraft* (1617), 207.
[67] See Andrew B. Appleby. *Famine in Tudor and Stuart England.* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1978), 109-132.

done to those in the area who were not her enemies seems to be acceptable, or, at least, unproblematic.

The references Sawyer makes to blowing up the world are not limited, however, to dramatic texts, as England, in terms of national security, had become a more terrifying place after November 5, 1605. This fear of gunpowder and the massive destruction of large edifices – an image that is still somewhat raw within the present-day, American consciousness – became coupled, at least in the contemporary imagination, with the socially-standardized nightmares of Antichrist, but also with the local occult services industry, as it did in the case of the Lancaster Assizes of August 1612, when Alison Device (herself a cunning woman) and others were arrested for holding a secret meeting where they allegedly planned to free four women who had previously been detained in Lancaster Gaol by killing the keeper of the castle (Thomas Covell), and then blowing up the castle itself. As Stephen Pumfrey notes, the claim itself is ridiculous[68]; however, it serves to explicate how a fear of bombs and massive destruction became transposed onto the capacities of local occult economies that had nothing to do with the acquisition of gunpowder and mass-murder. This sensationalism around the trial's proceedings is garnered almost exclusively from Thomas Potts, the clerk to the Lancaster Assizes', *The Wonderfull Discoverie of Witches in the Countie of Lancaster*. In the trial record, he mentions the meeting at Malkin Tower ten times over the course of a number of examinations that do not necessarily correspond to the narrative surrounding the alleged bomb-planning session at said Malkin Tower. It should give us pause, then, that Potts also dedicated the transcript to Thomas Knyvet, the man who apprehended Guy Fawkes in the undercroft of the building(s) he was about to turn to rubble. Potts' text, then, intentionally secures connections between witchcraft and anti-state

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[68] See "Potts, plots and politics: James I's *Daemonologie* and *The Wonderfull Discoverie of Witches,"* in *The Lancashire Witches: Histories and Stories.* (Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 2002), 22-41.

terrorism, a connection that is cemented by the repetitious citation of the non-existent Lancaster plot to blow up the castle before then next local Assizes. This sensationalization and/or dissemination fear, although it was one of the primary functions of broadsides and witchcraft treatises, locates an instance of what Derrida's *le savoir-faire de faire-savior* in the technology of cheap, mass printing that was beginning to emerge during the late-Tudor/early-Stuart regimes. In this sense, terror and literacy are locally born out together, as if the connection to the printed word always already entails a connection to the matrix of semiotic terrorization, i.e. the capacity to *read* may also be a certain capacity to become *terrorized*. The repetition within Potts' text, we might say, becomes a kind of proto-news scroll that we see at the bottom of our television sets today, as the references to the alleged bombing are shown from a variety of "angles" from within the context of each individual examinations (one might be reminded, in this sense, of how, after 9/11 every criminal act had to be indexed to possible "links to al-Qaeda"). As Derrida writes of the news cycles following 9/11, "in this way it was possible to have the impression, illusory or not, of having at one's own disposal the total archive, both public and non-public, of the totality of the event, of all making-known in an exhaustive making-known[.]"[69] Derrida's notion of the archive here helps to illustrate how repetition and dissemination serve both to exacerbate whatever initial event may have taken place, but it also serves to illustrate how Potts' own agency within an early modern communications cycle served, ironically, to *spread* the terror that he so desperately wanted to align himself with the policing thereof.

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[69] *The Beast and the Sovereign* (Vol 1), 38.

Fidelity to the Event (or, Sovereignty on the Gallows)

To conclude this chapter, I would like to examine how the concept of suicidal agrarian

terror is guaranteed via two processes: the curser's fidelity to the events and social disorder that

the curse brings into being and the corresponding juridical milieu that processes that event *qua*

confession. The anti-sorcery and witchcraft legislations of 1542 (Henry VIII), 1547 (Edward VI),

1562 (Elizabeth), and 1604 (James I/IV)[70] subsequently make it a crime to curse and a capital

crime if it led to murder (1563); however, the English trials both in their frequency and brutality

turned out to be fairly lax, especially in comparison to those on the continent. Since torture was

not used to elicit a confession, this may give us pause, as it does J.A. Sharpe[71], as to why exactly

witches and malefactors confessed. Those who terror'd[72] their neighbors with *malefica* were

aware that, in a post-1542 world, their acts functioned within a metrical space wherein their

social violence *and* the owning of that violence could result in a formal witchcraft charge.[73] So,

again, why did they confess?

As Thomas Cooper contends, many of the women who were accused of witchcraft were,

according to him, "desirous of sovereignty."[74] Many of the accused resorted to cursing (and

malefica in general) as way to get an upper hand, or at least put a temporary end to the torment

and neglect they had experienced at the hands of their neighbors.[75] The suspects' confessions

take this logic to an extreme by owning the events surrounding their attacks in a legally recorded

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[70] As Keith Wrightson notes, it is important that such legislation occurs at the beginning of regime changes, because afterwards it legitimizes the persecution that follows. "Witchcraft and Magic."
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1rHSu2oDZXE>
[71] *The Bewitching of Anne Gunter: A horrible* and *true story* of *deception, witchcraft, murder,* and the *King of England.* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 84.
[72] See note 33.
[73] *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 610.
[74] *Mystery of Witchcraft* (1612), 206.
[75] Thomas, 607-8.

context (*le faire savior*) and thereby making official the "invisible" wrongs done to them. The confession should be understood as a *sovereign* act that functions as a sort of juridical *potlatch*, an attempt to claim sovereignty over one's accusers by accepting/absorbing the annihilatory "gift" of the accusation (which usually means certain death).[76] As Bataille writes, "sovereignty is essentially the refusal to accept the limits that the fear of death would have us respect in order to ensure, in a general way, the laboriously peaceful life of individuals."[77] In this sense, confessions were always a kind of ritualistic performance whereby the accused attempted to cause as much damage as possible. Many of the accused confessed to their own actions and then implicated others (ex. Ursula Kemp). More interestingly, some witches made claims not only to the current events, but also to events that had transpired years earlier, such as natural disasters. In Scot's *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*, we read of Ant. Houin [sic] who "confessed at the time of hir death or execution, that she had raised all the tempests, and procured all the frosts and hard weather that happened in the winter of 1565: and that manie grave and wise men beleeved hir."[78] This owning both of the spatial and the temporal adds a significant weight to the confessions, as the malefactor intensified their position of sovereignty over the village (*It's **always** been me*) by asserting a sense of control that is, for some, unfalsifiable. The confession on the scaffold claims ownership (*qua* cause) to the terror generated through the ur-curse, collecting the payoff on the bet that was made within the local *oikos* of the situation: its people, animals, land, and all the possible relation between those factors. Fidelity to the event guarantees all those connections and thrusts them back onto the body politic in a chain reaction of sense as each asks, *What about*

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[76] "Potlatch is, like commerce, a means of circulating wealth, but it excludes bargaining. More often than not it is the solemn giving of considerable riches, offered by a chief to his rival for the purpose of humiliating, challenging, and obligating him. The recipient has to erase the humiliation and take up the challenge; he must satisfy the *obligation* that was contracted by accepting. He can only reply, a short time later, by means of a new potlatch, more generous than the first: He must pay it back with interest." *The Accursed Share: An Essay on General Economy*. Vol. 1. Trans. Robert Hurley. (New York: Zone Books, 1991), 67-8.

[77] *The Accursed Share*. Vol. 3. (New York: Zone Books, 1991), 221.

[78] *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* (1584), 54.

event X? Did she cause that too? Ultimately, this fear "without the apprehension of why or what" generates a sovereign position within the accused whereby she is able, if only for a brief moment, hold sway over the collective epistemology of the neighborhood, a veritable *ecology of fear.*[79]

The *belief* in the malefactor's control over the past and the present vaults the potential for sovereign action in the future as well. In this sense, the entire cycle, from curse to confession to execution, functions as both a *warning* and a *threat*, and it is for this reason structural curses are *political* for they "organize the panic of supposedly civil populations."[80] The fact that "wise men" believed that poor, marginalized women could control the weather, destroy crops, and kill animals and humans ultimately *organizes* this fear around her as a *subject* in her fidelity to their belief in her power, the terror that Hobbes claims is the organizing principle of sovereignty itself. The experience of the confession/warning/threat is an experience of sovereignty (as Bataille puts it, that which "is opposed to the servile and the subordinate"[81]). Fidelity to the event – including all the intentional and unintentional consequences that stem from it – creates a political *situation* whereby local anxieties over *right* are transformed into a political *action* through the medium of terror. The curse begins with a bet and ends with a belief, transposing a surplus of signs onto a surplus of land. The space in between, as I hope to have illustrated, is not a black box and may help us to better understand how witchcraft made use of local economies and the politics of the neighborhood to use terror as epistemological weapon.

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[79] I am borrowing this phrase from Mike Davis, whose book of the same title is an excellent examination of how the environment, both in its human and non-human elements, contributes to the economy of fear in Los Angles, California. See *The Ecology of Fear: Los Angeles and the Imagination of Disaster*. (New York: Metropolitan Books, 1998).

[80] Jacques Derrida. *The Beast and the Sovereign*. Vol. 1. Trans. Geoffrey Bennington. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

[81] *The Accursed Share*. Vol. 3. (New York: Zone Books, 1991), 197.

IV. MACBETH AND THE OCCULT ECONOMY OF SCOTLAND

As we have seen, cursing and *malefica* are deployed within the semiotic economy of

local agrarian politics as a means of asserting a kind of paradoxical, suicidal sovereignty amidst

the politics of enclosure movements and the topoaxiological milieus of rural England. Cursing,

as a mode of cognitive sabotage, works by causing the victim to operate on corrupted

epistemology thereby allowing the aggressor to wreak havoc on individuals, families, and local

populations simply by the victims assent to that "misinformation." In this chapter, we will

continue to examine the efficacy of these tactics in cases of anti-state terror and manipulation,

whereby the problem of sovereignty is amplified as the logic of the curse is aimed at the state

and the metaphysics of right. Using *Macbeth* as a case study, we will examine how language and

familiars (the preferred tactics of English witches) can be deployed in acts of anti-state terrorism.

This model figures Macbeth as an agent, or proxy, whose raw power becomes coupled with the

will of a group of political dissidents reacting to the instability and lack of regulation with

regards to the economy of Scotland that the play presents. By reading *Macbeth* from the

perspective of the weird sisters (and the rest of the lower orders), we will be able to cobble the

fragmentary economic data the play presents into a larger reading of the political economy under

both Duncan and Macbeth. Particular attention will also be paid to the politics of surplus-values

created within the social strata both in terms of the accumulation of capital and the state's

regulation of those processes. Within this dynamic, the play utilizes the voices of the lower

orders to establish the socioeconomic environment of a country destabilized through a lack of

civil and economic protection. Consequently, the play's transposition of maritime capitalist

ventures in the Middle East (the late-16th century Levant Company) onto an 11th century feudal

ethos may allow us to make further connections between economics, *malefica,* and, in this

chapter, the state's investment in protecting labor from both internal corruption and foreign

exploitation. The sisters' political investments will be regarded as a mode of metaphysical labor,

which, as Lyndal Roper points out, was a prime commodity during a period when anxieties over

maritime economic ventures intensified, thereby creating a desire for control that pushed many to

literally look into crystal-balls.[82] We will frame their attack on the common*weal* of Scotland as a

retribution for the state's incapacity to maintain order *and* its hypocrisy towards the occult

services market, particularly as a means of gaining foresight and security, an issue the play

makes explicit by having the sisters turn their prognosticatory power against the state. As an

experiment in political dystopia, *Macbeth* permits the sisters to ask, "If the state is allowed to

utilize violence as *foresight* to ensure *security* and fails horribly, does it follow that they should

be permitted to hunt down and murder professional agents within the realm who offer their skills

in *foresight* and *security*?" This question is particularly pertinent during a period when the

sovereign is actively involved in the privatization of England's natural resources and the

regulation of foreign capital, while simultaneously locking down on the *professional* capacities

of those who attempted to practice magic/prognostication/alchemy/astrology outside of the *court*.

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[82] See Lyndal Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil: Witchcraft, Sexuality, and Religion in Early Modern Europe.* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 125-138.

Day Labor, Night Labor, Black Labor, White Labor

The philosophical climate of the late 16th/early 17th centuries was one in which "magical thinking" had become the subject of courts and universities, particularly as the Tudor-Stuart regimes relied heavily on the services of astrologers and visionaries to make predictions concerning wars and other hardships. As early modern English philosophy attempted to move beyond scholasticism, much of the magical thinking that resurged in the late 16th century in England extended back to traditions associated with the mythical Hermes Trismegistus (notably the *Corpus Hermeticum*), a series of mystical-philosophical texts which combined Platonism, Stoicism, Cabbalistic, and Persian thought and whose traditions date as far back as ancient Egypt and Israel.[83] The 17th century also saw the incorporation of Neoplatonic thought into the English philosophical canon, notably via a group of philosophers associated with Cambridge (appropriately, the "Cambridge Platonists"). As Keith Thomas writes, Neoplatonism "emphasized the influence of the imagination upon the body, of the mind upon matter, and of words, incantations and written charms upon physical objects."[84] English Neoplatonists such as John Dee and Robert Fludd were engaged in research that included everything from alchemy to the circulation of the blood. Royal magicians found patronage both in England (Dee and Fludd were court philosophers to Elizabeth and James, respectively) and on the continent, and were involved in numerous state-sponsored projects. The magi of the courts figure as primarily scholars and professional advisors involved primarily with understanding the Book of Nature in terms of *time* and *space*. Dee was heavily involved in "official" measurements of time such as

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[83] Francis A. Yates. Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition. (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1991), 2-3. Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth and Seventeenth-Century England*. (New York: Penguin Books, 1971), 267.
[84] *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 266.

calendrical revisionism, astronomy (the meaning of the Great Comet of 1577), and setting

horoscopes for royal birthdays and coronations; however, professional astrologers were also

concerned with areas similar to that the village cunning-person, specifically spatial problems

such as treasure-hunting and stolen objects (some rural professionals even claimed to be tutored

by the prolific almanac-maker, William Lilly[85]).

Although there certainly existed an overlap between royal and rural magic, there is

evidence that animosities existed between the upper and lower orders with regards to the practice

of "figuring" future events through astrology, scrying, and crystal-gazing, a position voiced by

the astrological writer Christopher Heydon who wrote in 1603 that astrology was not appropriate

for the "mean and vulgar sort, but…hath been ever most familiar with great personages, princes,

kings and emperors"[86] However, this qualification was inaccurate, as "there was a large, though

indeterminate, number of low-level consultants scattered through the country, claiming to

operate by astrological methods, and substantially patronized by a popular and unsophisticated

clientele."[87] Although the primary trajectory of this chapter will be towards the powers of

prophecy and its correspondence to astrological election[88] and the local economy, we will also

explore how this economic reading of the magic services market offers alternate explanations for

understanding how witchcraft accusations developed in tandem with the *ethos* of financial risk.

The epistemological danger surrounding population increase and bad harvests fostered a

retributive moral ecology that sought out cunning men, white sisters, astrologers, and old, poor

women as explanations for economic instability. Witchcraft accusations then become a kind of

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[85] Ibid. 360, 362.

[86] *A Defence of Iudiciall Astrologie.* Quoted in ibid. 358.

[87] Ibid.

[88] "The details of the client's nativity were also needed before he could avail himself of the astrologer's third main service, that of making *elections*, or choosing the right moment for the right action. By comparing the relationship between the tendencies indicated by the client's horoscope with what was known about the future movement of the heavens, certain times could be identified as more propitious than others for embarking upon any potentially risky undertaking, such as going on a journey or choosing a wife." Ibid. 339.

neighborhood-level epistemological insurance against the "Heteroclites or Irregulars of Nature,"[89] compounded explanations of the dead cow and the sick child. This very notion of *risk*, precisely because of its utter epistemological ubiquity, becomes a plane on which the changing socioeconomic conditions of England are accessed, notably with regard to the consolidation of arable property and the intensification of overseas trade. This risk, then, on a certain level, was ameliorated by consultation with cunning persons. As Keith Thomas puts it, "Astrology, though beginning as a system of explanation, thus ended as one which held out the prospect of control. Like other kinds of magic, the astrological election was a formula to which men might resort at moments of impotence and uncertainty, when all other human agencies had failed."[90] In this sense, however, we should note that the risk inherent to both astrological prediction and commercial investment mutually compound each other.

Local occultism, as we saw with the phenomena surrounding cursing, becomes part of the metaphysical maintenance of the community, an organic *nomos* that connects, but also has the capacity to break symbolic bonds between people and objects (and, more specifically, *property*). As David Lawrence O'Keefe puts it, "magic frequently appears to be the use of…symbolic powers to control the terrors of the symbolic world that man has created and to get some control over it."[91] As I am suggesting, however, this control is somewhat unwieldy as it tends towards instability simply due to the epistemological dissonance between non-overlapping systems (star movements/movements of ships) it aligns. However, as Keith Thomas suggests, the social nature of consultations created a feedback loop that allowed for a certain degree of control over the social delineation of their advice, as practitioners "might pick up a good deal of local knowledge,

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[89] Francis Bacon, *The Advancement of Learning*. Quoted in Michael Witmore. *Culture of Accidents: Unexpected Knowledges in Early Modern England*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 5.
[90] *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 393.
[91] *Stolen Lightning: The Social Theory of Magic.* (New York: Continuum, 1982), 39.

and adapt their recommendations accordingly."[92] Professionally, operators offered advice and

methods for returning a sense of *equilibrium* to their neighbors and clients who were distressed

over moral and financial quandaries, when to plant, marry, or travel.[93] Many of the early modern

philosophical projects of the court magi, however, were aimed at delineating the physics of the

universe such that it could be organized and processed symbolically, as much of Dee and Fludd's

work was heavily involved in understanding the correspondence between micro and

macrocosmic influences (a key aspect of Paracelsean methodology), which, in turn, would reveal

the *nous*, or mind of Nature. The corresponding powers of reason were, in theory, congruent to

this "mind" and capable of reading it. The purpose of the philosopher was to facilitate a project

whereby the "corrupted Book of Nature"[94] might be understood such that the human mind is able

to restore the unity of God's creation with the uncertainty principle that sin had introduced into

it.[95] Court philosophers, concordantly, were involved in larger scale operations with(in) the state,

predicting wars, interpreting natural symbols, and composing almanacs; they were likewise often

accused of sorcery and the conjuration of spirits, often the outcome of experiments whose

parameters led them outside of the state's official sanctions and into the dangerous realm of

goetic knowledge (for every John Dee, there's an Edward Kelly).

     Given these mutual concerns over equilibriums between "high" and "low" magic, the

operators (white, black, court, or otherwise) offered services that sought to bring some

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[92] Ibid. 290.

[93] *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 367.

[94] Deborah E. Harkness. *John Dee's Conversations With Angels: Cabala, Alchemy, and the End of Nature*. (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1999), 4.

[95] "Human beings, hampered by Adam's original sin, were unable to communicate with God and His creatures and had to struggle to emulate the angels, who were perfect and unaffected by original sin and the moral fall. In the world promised after the Apocalypse, angels and humanity would live in harmony with nature, in perfect communion with God and all levels of the cosmos." Ibid.104. The philosophical concerns raised by Dee (and the Neoplatonists, for that matter) align Hermeticism with Hegel's thought in that philosophy becomes a dialectical project whereby human thought attempts to bring Being into contact with the self-actualizing Absolute, i.e. a *totality* of thought that would constitute the ultimate epistemological "security." Importantly, for our purposes, this philosophical ushering of Spirit towards the Absolute for Hegel becomes the ultimate role of the *State*.

metaphysical security to insecure clients, both in the lower and the higher orders – in fact, many

of services offered by cunning persons involved the location of stolen or lost *property*.[96] In other

words, even within the political and religious systems that were attempting to purge themselves

of the supernatural, professional magical thinking continued to influence neighborly relations

during a period of rapid economic change. We could go so far as to describe local magic as a

stimulus to economic activity, "enabling men to make a choice between different courses of

action when on rational grounds there was nothing to choose between them.[97] Thomas adds,

"divination allowed men to follow their fancy; it countenanced departures from the norm in an

otherwise traditional society."[98] This is an explicitly economic conceptualization of the role of

local magic, and local operators were not simply trafficking in merchandise or even use-values,

but pure *agency* itself. Just as a curse could help to introduce the New into an agrarian space,

then the election of commercial action also allowed for new markets, ways of interacting with

the world that were "departures" from the norm. I would go so far as to argue that this mode of

stimulation (a sort of occult proto-Keynesianism) was precisely *macroeconomic* given the scale

of its practice:

> The immediate impression made by the notebooks [of prominent English astrologers] is
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> that of the enormous volume of business these men handled. Between 1597 and 1601
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> Forman set an average of over 1,000 figures a year, and the inquires received from his
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> patients were well in excess of this number. Lilly's case-books, which survive
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> intermittently between 1644 and 1666, reveal a rapidly rising practice which, at its peak,
>
> was approaching 2,000 cases a year. John Booker, for whom the most complete records
>
> have survived, averaged roughly 1,000 cases a year from 1648 to 1665; he dealt with

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[96] See *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 252-64.
[97] Ibid. 289.
[98] Ibid.

approximately 16, 500 inquiries over the whole period. When it is recalled that these four were not necessarily the busiest of the 200 and upward astrologers who are known for certain have flourished between the accession of Elizabeth I and the death of Anne, some impression can be gained of the remarkable extent to which the English people had recourse to astrological divination during the period.[99]

As I will attempt to argue, however, the protectionism offered to "high" magic was not necessarily available to the local astrologer or cunning-person. The problem of protection, in part, was a result of the nebulous conception of which magic was permitted and which were not as the church was especially reticent to lend any credence to practices that existed outside of its official domain. As Reginald Scot writes, "Sometimes a murtherer with poison is called a witch…Sometimes because they study curious and vaine arts…Yea the verie word *Magus*, which is Latine for magician, is translated a witch; and yet it was hrtofore always taken in the good part. And at this daie it is indifferent to saie in the English toong; She is a witch; or, She is a wise woman."[100] Scot's skepticism is instructive here, especially since official witchcraft law retained the right to imprison for life practitioners of "lesser kinds of magic," including treasure-hunting and the search for lost goods.[101] Since all of these "crimes" were lumped together, it is also suggestive that neighbors had recourse to seek revenge against local magicians whom they believed had wronged them in their consultations: as Thomas puts it, "the repeated Tudor enactments against vagrant fortune-tellers provided another stick with which to beat the lesser members of the profession."[102] In a sense, this logic brings us full circle to the issues raised in the previous chapter concerning landlessness, as if property itself was a local defense against

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[99] Ibid. 364.
[100] *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*, 110.
[101] *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 526.
[102] Ibid. 412.

accusations of sorcery and conjuration. In other words, much of neighborly vitriol directed

towards poor, elderly, and often landless women was potentially directed at poor, elderly women

who may or may not have been involved in *professional* activities in and around market towns.

Consequently, we will be reading the sisters' actions as a mode of *labor* within this fragile

economic structure, particularly their capacity to establish equilibrium within the Scottish *nomos*.

Before doing so, however, I feel it is absolutely necessary to map the political and economic

topos of *Macbeth*'s Scotland. This will give us a better idea of what to do with the sisters'

prophecy with regards to Macbeth's agency, but will also give us a clearer understanding of

anachronisms within the play, particularly the attack on the Levant Company captain and his

wife.

The most significant data from the sisters' meeting in I.iii comes from the "first" witch's

account of her attack on a merchant and his wife, a "rump-fed runnion" (I.iii.3) who "munched

and munched and munched" (I.iii.4) on chestnuts. The repetition could refer to the sheer number

of nuts that the woman eats, but I also find the sense of duration built into the statement

particularly interesting, as it could suggest that the witch spent a significant period of time

watching the woman eat ("and…and…"). The quantity of nuts itself, combined with the sense of

duration serves to amplify the notion that the witch is both jealous and *hungry*, details that we

should recognized as a key element of the *overkill* we encounter in many witchcraft cases

(violent reactions to "petty" refusals of food or drink). As Piero Camporesi argues, "from the

world of hunger, privation, and frustration, in the illusory attempt to compensate for existential

alienation, there spring herbs with upsetting effects...the sublimation of the idiot and the

respect/terror for the madman…incubi and succubi…cannibalism and vampirism, the nocturnal

flight and gathering of witches; and the collective demonic and nocturnal fancy of the

generations belonging to the pre-industrial era."[103] In other words, the violence of witchcraft

must not be read separately from its caloric "index" and the capacity for hunger to elicit

particularly violent and sometimes desperate reactions to refusals of foodstuffs ("Aroint thee,

witch!" I.iii.6). Congruently, the witch immediately identifies the wife as a symbol of *excess*

both through her use of repetition (the amount of nuts available for consumption), but also

through her inclusion of the wife's corpulence ("rump-fed") and lasciviousness ("runnion") in

her report; however, reading the report as a reaction to a refusal fails to explain exactly why the

witch's retribution falls on the husband and not on the wife. What must be established is a

connection between the motive and the (planned) attack itself – in other words, why not instantly

gratify one's lust for revenge with the present (presumably, deserving) object of disdain? Why

defer that anger onto another victim who is not connected, either causally or geographically, with

the refusal of foodstuffs? The inclusion of the *Tiger* (a shipping vessel whose exploits during the

1590's are recorded in Hakluyt's *Voyages*) in this narrative of neighborly revenge is an obvious

anachronism, as maritime mercantilism with the Middle East did not exist in the Scotland in the

11th century. However, the reference to the *Tiger* opens the play up to a larger economic world

that the source narrative does not historically (and, therefore, epistemologically) have access to.

The play is asking us to transpose one economic reality onto another one, but what does this

accomplish, then, as per the relations between *English* witches and their neighbors?

Scottish witches, as opposed to their English counterparts, were more heavily involved in

control over the coastline, a point made abundantly clear in 1589, when a group of Scottish

witches allegedly attempted to attack King James VI and his new bride on their return from

Copenhagen. The witches' attack in *Macbeth*, however, is less a direct assault on the sovereign

himself than an attack on what sovereignty has sanctioned within the political economy of

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[103] *Bread of Dreams: Food and Fantasy in Early Modern Europe*. (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago, 1989), 125.

Scotland (although, as I will suggest, there are corollaries between James' regulatory policies

and the witch's attack). The reference to the *Tiger* (I.iii.7) occurs in Hakluyt's account of a 1583

voyage of Ralph Fitch and Ralph Newberie on behalf of the Levant Company, a state-backed

currant monopoly (est. 1581) whose operations were scattered throughout the Levant, i.e.

Ottoman territories in what is now the area comprised by Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Jordan, and

Palestine. The monopoly of currant imports was extremely profitable (up to 300%[104]), and James

was eager, at the beginning of his reign, to secure the impositions that the monopoly had

afforded Elizabeth I, a process that culminated in his legal victory over John Bates in 1606, a

merchant from the Levant Company who refused to acknowledge the impositions. The Court of

Exchequer claimed that James' right to imposition was simply a by-product of the "civil justice,"

and that the king's absolutism existed for "the nation's safety."[105] To extrapolate this

information, we must understand the attack on the *Tiger* as a treasonous act, a disruption of the

king's income, and, consequently, the capacity for that income to support "civil justice."

What then should we make, then, of the first witch's retribution against the "rump-fed

runnion" with regard to her husband's notoriously lucrative enterprise? The economic details

surrounding the scene with the captain's wife recontextualize the witch's apparent jealousy,

tying the wife's corpulence and household income to the economic aggression manifest in the

protection afforded to the Levant Company. In other words, the wife's apparent caloric security

comes at the exclusivity of the international market her husband is participating in. This selective

protectionism, however, is utterly incomprehensible with regards to the lack of physical

protection that is presented at the opening of the play (a situation that might make one reconsider

the transfer of violence that Hobbes so advocates for in *Leviathan*). We might say then that the

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[104] J. Latimer. *The History of the Society of Merchant Venturers of Bristol*. (Bristol: Arrowsmith, 1903), 137.

[105] Dalzell Chalmers. *Chalmers and Hood Phillips' Constitutional laws of Great Britain, the British empire and commonwealth.* (London: Sweet & Maxwell, 1946), 178.

vitriol leveled at the captain and his wife is intensified by the *spatiality* of his profession: since its business is always geographically tangential to the economy it participates in, it does not have to rely on the same modes of protection that, say, agriculture is reliant upon – i.e. civil war is not as significant a problem for an industry whose production of wealth is dependent upon successful maritime *transportation*, as opposed to those operating on the land, i.e. the theatre of war. The tangency of royal revenue to a source that is not dependent upon the internal peace of the state is at the root of the political problems in Scotland. In other words, the lack of an even juridical playing field allows the king to continue to profit when he himself has contributed to a divided, and apparently, not very well protected, state.

The attacks leveled at the captain and his wife, however, are part of a larger economic discourse concerning magic as a lucrative profession, particularly the reliance of commercial enterprises on magical services, a fact that is underscored by the sheer number of consultations that were made.[106] As Thomas notes, many local professionals were quite successful, able to make thirty or forty pounds *per annum* and eventually buy land and homes.[107] Given the ubiquity of these practices, we may be able to gauge how this system began to interact with other systems, such as the mercantile ventures to the Levant, since "we know that magic and early science were often closely connected, and that both found interested audiences among the educated urban merchant élites."[108] Much of these services centered around the astrological prediction of when to launch ships and which ships to invest in (*election*), but also went so far as to make predictions concerning market futures, particularly in the form of almanacs.[109] Some wizards

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[106] "Sorcerers are too common; cunning men, wizards, and white witches, as they call them, in every village, which, if they be sough unto, will help almost all infirmities of body and mind[.]" Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*. Ed. Holbrook Jackson. (New York: New York Review of Books, 2001), ii. 6.
[107] *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 297.
[108] Lyndal Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil: Witchcraft, Sexuality, and Religion in Early Modern Europe.* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 127.
[109] *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 367-8.

were involved in scrying, i.e. divination by means of a crystal or water to foresee future or distant events. As Lyndal Roper suggests, the practice allowed merchants and investors to oversee how their capital was being managed, *en route*, in the middle of the ocean.[110] This "early modern satellite spy-equipment"[111] allowed early capitalists to monitor their investments and even decide whether or not to insure them.[112] The meshing of the occult with overseas commerce was also particularly widespread as "the seafaring community may have formed as much as a sixth of [William] Lilly's clientele."[113] As Thomas continues, "the notebooks of Lilly and his colleagues contain the names of scores of ships inquired after by their owners, or by relatives of the crew."[114] Despite its value to investors and crewmen, prognostication remained officially illegal as the witchcraft statue of 1604 only reduced the crimes of treasure-hunting and the search for lost goods from death to life imprisonment.[115] The nebulous categories by which the government defined and prosecuted those practicing magic brought about a debate as to the *ends* of magic, although, as Thomas puts it, services like crystal-gazing "[were] only one stage removed from the deliberate invocation of spirits."[116] In the *Daemonologie*, James does not make any exception with regards to these ends, as he writes that witches and sorcerers should be prosecuted and punished along with those "such as consults, enquires, entertains, & ouerseees them, which is seene by the miserable ends of many that askes councell of them."[117] In other words, James insists that the means of such services never justify the ends (commerce, cow-killing, or otherwise). Of course, his attitudes towards these ends will, in contrast, begin to become less vitriolic over the next decade, and we might read his intellectual coolness with

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[110] *Oedipus and the Devil*, 128-9.
[111] Ibid.
[112] *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 368.
[113] Ibid. 367.
[114] Ibid.
[115] Ibid. 526.
[116] Ibid. 256.
[117] James I, *Daemonolgie*, 26.

regard to the English trials as adding insult to injury to those professionals who were being prosecuted under similar statutes that James seemed to relish in the Scottish bloodbaths of 1590-1 and 1597.[118] For if the practices of royal magicians were "indistinguishable from the village wizards"[119] then the terrorization of local magicians not engaged in *malefica* seems to belie, as I have stressed above, a class antagonism with regards to the *ends* of occult labor as for-profit state commerce was to be aligned with state-sanctioned professionals and not old women in market towns.

By reading the sisters in *Macbeth* as facilitators of a political protest, we will be able to see the extent to which local astrologers and magicians registered this dichotomy between what were permissible economic activities and what were *malefica*. As Thomas noted above, cunning persons were typically more at-risk with regards to full-blown witchcraft accusations,[120] and their association with (or capacity to perform) maleficent acts was continually weighed against their larger function within the local economy. Since local operators trafficked in mechanisms by which their clients would *elect* to perform actions (in many cases, the bringing to *market* of agency), we may begin to understand their participation in the economy as an impetus towards the *movement* of goods and services (a service that surely attracted adventurer merchants and farmers alike). If this movement was unaffected by the wizards' operations, then the neighborhood might not register the magician as the object cause of local turmoil (a dynamic that connects early modern witchcraft beliefs with those of the some modern African conceptions of witchcraft[121]). However, in many instances, clients and neighbors were assailed with information

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[118] Pauline Croft, *King James*. (New York: Palgrave, 2003), 26.
[119] *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 358.
[120] Ibid. 677.
[121] See E. E. Evans-Pritchard, "The Notion of Witchcraft Explains Unfortunate Events," *Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic among the Azande*. (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1976), 18-32; James Howard Smith, *Bewitching Development: Witchcraft and the Reinvention of Development in Neoliberal Kenya*, (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2008), 15-23.

that was false or divisive within families, such as the prediction of the death of the eldest son of a

family or the break-up of an engagement.[122] If false information fed into the economic flux (*qua*

individual agency) becomes the basis of a malfunctioning social dynamic, then the source of that

agency may eventually become suspect and formal charges might be brought against the

magician, such as in cases wherein she foretold the "of sudden death or bastard children for

one's enemies."[123]

There is an element of this dynamic operating in the weird sisters' attack on the captain

and his wife, as it functions as a rejoinder to the wife's refusal and as revenge against a client

with whom she may have done business. I am arguing, in turn, that this is essentially the content

of her remark that his ship his "cannot be lost" (I.iii.24). Of course, on a certain level, it is easy

to interpret this line as a corollary to the theological arguments surrounding witches' heretical

authority to summon demons.[124] However, I would like to submit the first witch's debriefing as

evidence of established business relationship with the captain, as the witch seems to have already

made a *forecast* regarding the fate of the ship – is this simply an avoidance on Shakespeare's part

of showing a witch sink a boat in front of James? If not, how can the ship *not* be lost if she has

the capacity to control the weather? I contend that these lines ask us to read the interdiction

against the sinking of the vessel not as a problem within the theology of physics, but as evidence

of the witch's foreknowledge of the fate of the vessel. Consequently, if she had made some sort

of prognostication concerning the ship, she may not be able (or willing) to deviate from its

predetermined path – a notion made explicit through Shakespeare's innovative use of "wayward"

as an adjective, which asks the reader to consider the sisters' as professionals trafficking in *fate*.

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[122] *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 411.
[123] Ibid. 291.
[124] See Michael D. Bailey, "From Sorcery to Witchcraft: Clerical Conceptions of Magic in the Later Middle Ages." *Speculum*. Vol. 76. No. 4. (Oct 2001), 960-990.

This would, in turn, explain the objective correlative of vitriol leveled at the captain himself as he is profiting from her professional advice while his wife simultaneously refuses her chestnuts. In her interactions with the husband, then, she would have been seen as a professional agent, while in the interaction with the wife, she is essentially reduced to a beggar, a dynamic that is all the more significant given the extensive interactions between maritime trade and the occult.

This collusion functions to illustrate the dual view of witches as both professionals and social outcasts, as their activities sought to rectify a legislative problem that allows protected individuals to secure massive profits while leaving those most vulnerable unprotected. This is not an exaggeration. In 1571, after a heated debate in Parliament, the Usury Act was passed which allowed for interest to be charged up to 10% (what amounts the creation of capital out of money, time, and trust, i.e. "credit"); the following year, Elizabeth updates the Poor Law's, establishing whipping and mutilation (a hole bored through the ear with a hot iron) as punishments for vagabondage (note also that the law made no distinction between the able-bodied poor who refused to work and the able-bodied who were seeking work).[125] In this sense, profit and interest are directly correlated to the world of local magic as many women were punished not because they were witches, but simply because they were poor and regarded as idle: the 1572 statute targeted those persons "feigning themselves to have knowledge in physiognomy, palmistry, or other abused sciences."[126] This must have proved especially disturbing to those who were genuinely attempting to practice their art as it may have become indistinguishable from histrionics of the wandering poor, notably in the eyes of local magistrates. In this sense, the first witch's vitriol is channeled at a client who is profiting from her foresight while allowing the social order that he leaves behind to discard her as an undesirable who can legally be tortured for

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[125] *The Age of Elizabeth (1547-1603)*. Ed. Arundell Esdaille. (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1912), 37-40.
[126] Ibid.

practicing magic. Put more broadly, the differential between local hunger and non-local

accumulation is a product of exclusionary practices that seal off the market from the lower strata

while simultaneously alienating those working poor who attempt to survive through their use of

magic within local markets. (The relation between magic and commerce essentially becomes an

under-the-table exchange as industries become reliant on services that are located as potential

causes of their failure – which is exactly what happens to the captain.)

This exclusion is all the more politically damning to the merchant class because of the

hyperbolic profits being made through the private monopolies. Many local officials were also

participants in these monopolies, notably the Turkey Company (later, the Levant Company; still

later, the East India Company). As Robert Brenner notes, "Of the twelve patentees of 1581, no

fewer than eight were London aldermen, or became aldermen at some point during the 1580's.

Three were sometime MP's. Their average subsidy payment was £217 in 1582; in that year no

more than sixty-five citizens in the whole of London made subsidy payments of £200 or more.

"[127] The net profits of these officials were astronomical: as Keith Wrightson puts it, "Of a sample

of 140 Jacobean London aldermen, fifty-five (39.3 per cent) died worth more than £20,000–

excluding land-holdings – and seventy-eight (55.7 per cent) worth between £10,000 and £20,000.

This was a *prodigious* wealth by the standards of the day and probably brought them annual

incomes between one and two thousand pounds, placing them on par with major landowners."[128]

The astronomical figures did not go unnoticed by the public, however, as outcry was directed

towards the East India Company "by some sections of public opinion because of its enormous

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[127] *Merchants and Revolution: Commercial Change, Political Conflict, and London's Overseas Traders, 1550-1653.* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1993), 62-3.
[128] *Earthly Necessities: Economic Lives in Early Modern Britain.* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2000),191. [italics mine]

profits."[129] One critic characterized the Levant Company's members as being "born rich and adding wealth to wealth by trading in a beaten road to wealth."[130] James himself seemed aware of this imbalance in 1605 as he states,

> Nor yet is it…a conuenient place for priuate men vnder the colour of general Lawes, to propne nothing but their owne particular gaine, either of the hurt of their priuate neighbors, or to the hurt of the whole State in generall, which many times vnder faire and pleasing Titles, are passed ouer, and so by stealth procure without consideration, that the priuate meaning of them tendeth to nothing but either to the wrecke of a particular partie, or else vnder colour of publicke benefite to pill the poore people and serue as it were for a general Impost vpon them for filling the purses of some priuate persons.[131]

Given the state's propensity towards protected massive profits and impositions, the dichotomy in the opening scenes of *Macbeth* between foreign trade and local hunger helps voice a historical concern echoed by many political economists, notably Thomas Mun, whose *A Discourse of Trade* (1621) [132] sought to address contemporary objections to the East India Company (of which he was a director). The third section of the text is particularly striking as it locates political dissent over the differential between local food production and the provisioning of merchant adventures overseas – an interchange that many believed would lead to the destabilization of local grain markets. The objection to provisioning of extremely long and grueling voyages was exacerbated by the public's somewhat morbid deliberation over the perceived expenditure of

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[129] *A History of Gold and Money*, 212. See also, *Merchants and Revolution: Commercial Change, Political Conflict, and London's Overseas Traders, 1550-1653*, 51-91. "At a conservative estimate…the twelve men who controlled the Levant commerce in these five years [1582-7] drove a trade worth more than £500,000, or £100,000 a year." Ibid. 62.
[130] Ibid. 192.
[131] "A Speech in the Parliament Hovse," *Political Writings*. Ed. J. P. Sommerville. (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1994), 156.
[132] "Adam Smith was later to say that it formed the basis of political economy, not only for England but for all nations." Pierre Vilar, *A History of Gold and Money: 1450-1920*. Trans. Judith White. (London: Verso, 1984), 211.

caloric energy on high-risk ventures that often resulted in shipwrecks and piracy.[133] In other

words, the concern is not only over the amount of profit that is garnered in these ventures, but

also, potentially, the amount of food that might be wasted in the event of any particular vessel's

demise. This makes the sisters' presumed use of "a pilot's thumb" (28) in their cauldron all the

more disturbing as the pilot's hands on a wheel have literally become the vehicles of an

expenditure without return – a loss that will be rendered by the sisters into something to be

consumed.

This concern over the expenditure of foodstuffs during times of dearth (a stark reality, for

instance, at the time of Mun's publication of his *Discourse* in the early 1620's[134]) reveals the

tenor of local attitudes towards grain at the turn of the century. However, I would argue that the

concern over overseas trade and exorbitant profits compounds social anger if we examine the

loss of purchasing power during the Tudor-Stuart period, a rate that fell by 50% as prices rose

between 1500 and 1640.[135] These trends, combined with the depopulating effects of enclosure

and engrossing projects, the economy, for some, would have been the perfect inflationary storm

and I would like to discuss these aspects of the Scottish economy as we proceed into an

examination of other members of the lower orders. I contend that *Macbeth* attempts to portray all

of these issues via its depiction of the effects of depopulation and inflation on farming and

manufacture, but also through the masterless labor force that has been extracted from the

commons and hurled into privatized state terror. This data is presented primarily in two scenes in

the play: the Porter's play-acting with the professions and Macbeth's ongoing mismanagement of

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[133] Thomas Mun, *A Discourse of Trade* (London: Nicholas Okes, 1621), 33; 37-8. Strangely, Mun also seems to suggest that sending "desperate and vnruly people" keeps crime down, by "purging" England of undesirables, as if their just desserts equate to being sent on voyages that he insists are "not so dangerous and mortall." See ibid.36-7.
[134] Alan Everitt, "The Marketing of Agricultural Produce," *The Agrarian History of England and Wales*. Vol. IV 1500-1640. Ed. Joan Thirsk. (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press), 575.
[135] Alan Everitt, "Farm Laborers," *The Agrarian History of England and Wales*. Vol. IV 1500-1640. Ed. Joan Thirsk. (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press), 435.

resources and institutions. I will combine this information with the corresponding data related to the *f*-stop of the play in the hopes of generating a reading of the professions that helps to elucidate the correspondence between political disorder and natural disaster. As we proceed, I hope to elaborate on the notion that Scotland's problems are *structural* and not simply products of warrior politics within a rigid hierarchy as this conceptualization is almost immediately undermined by the anachronistic economic landscape that the Shakespeare folds onto 11th century Scotland. In this sense, the play presents a level of economic diversity that would have been unfathomable during the time period referenced. *Macbeth*, in this sense, through its intertwining of two political and economic realities, creates a hybrid epistemology in which the hierarchical nightmare of merit-based usurpation collides with the hemispherical economy of exchange that emerged in the late 16th century. I will argue that the concerns over labor, wages, and prices in the play will be essential to our understanding of state of affairs that the sisters are reacting to, both in terms of the vigilante terror we saw with the captain, but, more importantly, for the political project they engage Macbeth in (the specific dynamics of which we will explore below in the second half of this chapter).

News from Scotland: Emergency, Inflation, and the Privatization of Valor

Given the violence and disorder with which the play opens, we will concordantly be

elaborating upon Berger's notion that "something is rotten in Scotland" and that "something

intrinsic to the structure of Scottish society, something deeper than the melodramatic wickedness

of one or two individuals, generates these tendencies toward instability, conflict, sedition, and

murder."[136] Berger puts it nicely a few paragraphs later when he suggests that the disorder in

Scotland "*precedes*, rather than *follows from*, the horrors perpetuated by the Macbeths[.]"[137]

Concordantly, the state of emergency that we encounter in the play equates to the instability of

the political structure of Scotland during the 11th century wherein the aspects of tanistry law

which defined succession, by establishing a balance between members of a prominent clan.

However, non-primogenitive succession led to frequent assassinations, as before 1100, *eleven*

Scottish kings "were killed by, or in favour of, their immediate successor"[138] Although

Shakespeare does not echo the historical sources by laboring to paint Duncan as an inept king, I

would like to suggest that there is ample evidence of mismanagement and subterfuge. As the

historical evidence regarding his character seems to suggest, the problem with Duncan's regime

is its lack of foresight and regulation, deficiencies which impinge on the *security* of the

commonweal. In this sense, Shakespeare's Duncan is a draft of Holinshed's Duncan, a sovereign

who is described as "negligent…in punishing offenders," a leniency whereby "manie misruled

person tooke occasion thereof to trouble the peace and quiet state of the commonwealth."[139] The

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[136] "The Early Scenes of MacBeth: Preface to a New Interpretation," *ELH* 47 (1980), 5. Berger's argument goes on to concentrate on the problem of the zero-sum games set up between Duncan and his warriors with regards to the leeway he grants them to accumulate violent power, and reading, I would argue prefigures, to a certain degree, Alan Sinfield's recent reading of the dual nature of violence in the play (which we will explore below).
[137] Ibid. 6.
[138] Nick Aitchison. *Macbeth: Man and Myth*. (Thrupp: Sutton Publishing Limited, 1999), 13.
[139] *Holinshed's Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland*. Vol. 5. (London: J. Johnson, 1808). p. 265

ensuing violence of rebellion, both in the sources and the play, seems to be a product of

Duncan's incapacity to inspire an appropriate quanta of *terror* (what Hobbes describes as a kind

of social glue) in his nobles.[140] To be certain, the rebellion is quelled in I.ii., but, given the

violent historical precedent, I think the effects of this belated security on public opinion would be

minimal, especially given the destabilizing effects of Duncan's decision to make Malcolm Prince

of Cumberland in the wake of the counterinsurgency: if anything, Duncan's decision completely

abandons tanistry in favor of a system that is diametrically opposed to the order of the body

politic.[141] We might go so far to say that, given the power differential that hangs over Macbeth as

a nuclear "minion" (I.ii.19), this act of succession in itself is a tacit capitulation, a virtual

declaration of civil war.[142] In this sense, Duncan speeds up a process that had already been in

place: by deliberately violating tanistry, he essentially makes Malcolm and himself *exceptions*,

which equates to "the suspension of the entire existing order."[143] This degenerative cycle of

pseudo-legitimization–capitulation– rebellion (= 11th century Scotland) is not simply a problem

for would-be royals, though, as its effects on the population in general can be seen by a

disturbing lack of security that seems to be primarily structural with regards to the local

administrators and their capacities to defend the people both from Duncan's dotage and

Macbeth's reign of terror in the later acts. In the play, Scotland's administrative and regulatory

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[140] "This is the generation of LEVIATHAN, or rather, to speak more reverently, of that *mortal god* to which we owe, under the *immortal God*, our peace and deference. For by this authority, given him by every particular man in the commonwealth, he hath the use of so much power and strength conferred on him that, by terror thereof, he is enabled to conform the wills of them all to peace at home and mutual aid against their enemies abroad." *Leviathan*. Eds. A.P Martinich and Brian Battiste. (Buffalo: Broadview Editions, 2011), 159.

[141] As Arthur F. Kinney puts it, "Tyrannical pronouncements such as that of Shakespeare's Duncan (1.4), it was argued, brought about their own opposition." *Lies Like Truth: Shakespeare, Macbeth and the Cultural Moment*. (Detroit: Wayne State Univ. Press, 2001), 104.

[142] As Christoph Clausen puts it, "The moral debts [Duncan] owes to his most imposing fighter jeopardize the monarch's superiority, so assuming the role of generous giver provides a means for the symbolical re-adjustment of the balance of power." *Macbeth Multiplied: Negotiating Historical and Medial Difference Between Shakespeare and Verdi*. (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005), 200.

[143] Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology*. Trans. George Schwab. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1985), 12.

agents – every thane in the play except Macbeth[144] – flee not only their titled properties, but also

the subjects they are sworn to protect and the local markets they are entitled (literally) to oversee:

this point is made glaringly clear both by Lady Macduff, but also the nameless, barricaded,

screaming women in V.v.8. that surprise Macbeth – he seems to have had no idea they were even

there.This theme of speed corresponds to Macbeth's dromological tactic of accelerating the

succession/legitimation process,[145] and they are essentially two sides of the political coin (a

"coinage" that corresponds to the *debt* that Duncan is in to Macbeth, a debt that he essentially

defaults on by naming Malcolm Prince of Cumberland). By breaking tanistry laws, Duncan also

throws the country into bureaucratic disorder, and consequentially speeds up the Scottish *kyklos*

of heads on pikes.[146]

These deregulatory policies allow dissent to foment without a proportionate reaction (an

appropriate "head-to-pike" ratio) – in Hobbesean political anatomy, it is as if Scotland's "joints"

and "nerves" (its judicial system and "rewards and punishments," respectively) have failed to

perform the state's "business" (i.e. "the people's safety") because Duncan's policies have

enabled the Cawdors and Macdonwalds of the state to sever themselves from the body politic

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[144] Ten that we know of: Macdonwald, the unnamed Thane of Cawdor, Malcolm, Donalbain, Ross, Lennox, Macduff, Angus, Menthieth, and Caithness.

[145] "*Macbeth* is very much shorter than the other three [later] tragedies, but our experience in traversing it is so crowded and intense that it leaves an impression not of brevity but of speed. It is the most vehement, the most concentrated, perhaps we may say the most tremendous, of the tragedies." A.C. Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy*. (New York: Fawcett Premier, 1986), 276.

[146] This term originates in Polybius' *Histories* and is developed by Plato and Machiavelli to account for the dangerous "cycling" of governmental forms through their inceptions and eventual degeneration (democracy – anarchy; aristocracy – oligarchy; monarchy – tyranny). As Machiavelli puts it, "this, then, is the cycle through which all commonwealths pass, whether they govern themselves or are governed. But rarely do they return to the same form of government, for there can scarce be a state of such vitality that it can undergo often such changes and yet remain in being. What usually happens is that, while in a state of commotion in which it lacks both counsel and strength, a state becomes subject to a neighboring and better organized state. Were it not so, a commonwealth might go on for ever passing through these governmental transitions." *The Discourses*. Trans. Leslie J. Walker. (New York: Penguin Books, 1970), 109. I would contend that this exactly what occurs in the period that *Macbeth* depicts: a cycle of king-killing that, historically, only seems to abate after Malcolm imports Domesday: note that the length of Scottish reigns increases significantly (about 300%) in the late-11th/early 12th centuries following Malcolm's reign.

only to strike back at it with the aid of Norwegian troops and Irish mercenaries, a swarm of "multiplying villainies" (I.ii.11).[147] Following Hobbes, since it is the function of the *head* of state is to foresee and prevent such affronts to the commonweal, it is particularly disturbing in the fourth scene when Duncan admits that he was unable to recognize the previous Thane of Cawdor's dissent, having placed in him an "*absolute* trust" (I.iv.13) – given the political climate of the 11th century, how would a king come to place an *absolute* trust in anyone? (Having presumably read the chapters leading up to Macbeth's rule in Holinshed, there is a high probability that Shakespeare was well aware of the historical political climate he was inserting this "absolute trust" into.)

We might find it as odd, also, that Duncan relies on reports of the execution of a traitor, especially since the presence of the sovereign at the execution of a traitor amplifies its capacity to terrorize the populace into fearing both rebellion and his rule. Here Shakespeare may be contrasting Duncan to James, who had recently taken a "fascinated interest" in the trials and executions of his would-be assassins.[148] Why does Duncan rely on reports to understand the trusted man's final words, especially since they are a public declaration of apology as Cawdor asks for the king's "pardon" (I.iv.6)? Furthermore, there is another element to this dynamic that links James' body to Duncan's, especially if we note the descriptions in Boece of Duncan as being "nocht exercit in weris nor yit knew how sic thingis mycht be dressit."[149] Duncan's explicit squeamishness in the historical sources, I would suggest, might be linked to his reliance on reportage, as he seems almost surprised at the sight of the effects of violence in his opening lines ("What bloody man is that?" I.ii.i). Holinshed and Buchanan have taken great pains to gemini

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[147] Hobbes, 1.
[148] David Harris Willson, *King James VI & I*. (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1956), 226.
[149] Hector Bœce, *Heir beginnis the history and croniklis of Scotland* (1540), clxxi.

Duncan's "piete" with Macbeth's "cruelte," [150] as "yairfore ye peple desyrit yair maneis to have bene *tempora* with otheris."[151] In the play, this dichotomy becomes obvious after Macbeth kills the *tempering* agent (whom he should be serving) and unleashes a decidedly untempered tyrant. Consequently, one could also argue that the play's real degeneration begins when Macbeth kills the final tempering agent: a comrade who is involved as strongly as Macbeth is in national defense, but also seems to have some notion of sustainability within the regime, a quality revealed both through his relationship with Fleance (which is, of course, contrasted by both Macbeth and Macduff) and his concern over the "husbandry" (II.i.5) of the external world.[152] In this sense, his concern over the thrift with regards to late-night candle-burning also plays a key role in the trope of darkness that the play establishes; however, Banquo's optimistic interpretation of the ominous darkness serves to establish his character as an agent who expresses an explicit value of sustainability – we will explore the role of Banquo in the larger political dynamic of the play, especially with regard to the appearance of Hecate, in greater detail in the next section.

In the clamor after Duncan's murder, the Porter's early-morning play-acting reveals a caché of economic data that can be understood as a description not just of the "hell" that Macbeth has just created via Duncan's murder, but also as the hell propagated by the former sovereign's mismanagement especially since it is being enunciated in the opening *minutes* of Macbeth's reign by a character who does not know that the king is already dead. If we read the initial moments of the scene as a reflection of the political economy of Scotland, we will be able elaborate upon our reading of Scotland's social stratification by examining two of the

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[150] Ibid.
[151] Ibid. [emphasis mine]
[152] "Heaven is normally conceived as the site of infinity. Heaven is infinity's home. But 'husbandry' – the implementation of a restricted economy – suggests finitude, on organized abridgment." Harald William Fawkner, *Deconstructing Macbeth: The Hyperontological View*. (Cranbury: Associated Univ. Presses, 1990), 60.

"professions" (II.iii.17) the Porter relates as manifestations of the current *English* political and economic reality, a reality that we have seen was explicitly concerned over surpluses and excess and their relation to an everyday market reality. We see this especially in the case of the farmer "that hanged himself on th' expectation of plenty" (4-5) and can initially interpret these lines in terms of the notorious local sin of grain-hoarding, as the farmer hopes to convert a surplus into a future profit, a practice that becomes a reoccurring political problem for Shakespeare, both in his writing (notably *Coriolanus*) and his own life (in 1598, he was threatened with hanging by the people of Stratford for hoarding/malting barley[153]). The hoarding of grain was always a politically-charged activity as it posited a surplus that was not available for public consumption, an excess that would subsequently generate capital (which might not include, even then, local consumption): As John B. Harcourt puts it, "the farmer has, through his hoarding, acted detrimentally to the well-being of society: private gain has prevailed over the public interest."[154] This phenomenon, of course, intensified social unrest during periods of dearth (such as the mid-1590's), as the public demanded that surpluses be brought to market: in 1587, the Privy Council released its *Book of Orders*, thus providing warrants to licensed merchants "who were preferably not also large grain stockholders"[155] to purchase surpluses of grain and bring them to market. Historians of the English economy debate as to whether the hoarding of grain stabilized markets or upset them, but what is clear is that the issue was an intense site of contention over private profit and the common good. Of course, during times of dearth, the price of grain increases dramatically, so the notion of hoarding towards a *higher* price during a period of bad harvests only serves to destabilize what was already a tenuous caloric security on the part of the poor.

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[153] James Shapiro. *A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare: 1599*. (New York: Harper Collins, 2005), 240-1.
[154] "I Pray You, Remember the Porter," *Shakespeare Quarterly*. Vol. 12. No. 4. (Autumn, 1961), 394.
[155] Randall Nielsen. "Storage and English Government Intervention in Early Modern Grain Markets." *The Journal of Economic History*. Vol. 57, No. 1 (March 1997), 2.

Public discontent, especially among the poor, often broke out into public riot and the government recorded a total of around 40 grain-related riots from 1585 to 1660.[156] Riot itself, however, is a negotiation of a "surplus value" as it must continually monitor its growth lest it evolve into treason. In this sense, both riot and the object of riot are inverses of each other, as grain riots are a political risk deployed against the risk inherent to the market and its attendant meteorology.

As a farmer, prices become an indication of every other farmer's failure, and, consequently, that failure (*qua* price increase) is transmuted into profit for the farmer whose crops do not fail: the epistemology of capital overcodes the caloric topography of the land, and thus transforms the topoaxiology of the countryside into an economic game whereby the other's (over)production is diametrically opposed to one's own.[157] In other words, the productive capacity of the *bios* becomes disturbingly antithetical to any one producer's capacities, as the farmer commits suicide "in sheer frustration, that is, at nature's bounty."[158] However, as Harcourt also notes, the emendation allows us to read the farmer's waiting as not simply a bet on a future, but also as an engagement with the occult services market, a reading prompted by by textual emendations made by Dover Wilson (1951), Kenneth Muir (1953), and Eugene Waith (1954) in their additions of the play: as Harcourt summarizes, the parallel constructions that the Porter's greets each "profession" with allow us to read "Come in time" (5) as "'Come in, time-server', which not only suggests the farmer's speculative interest in almanacks, calendars, and other structurings of time, but also establishes a link, *server* now suggesting *waiter* rather than *watcher*[.]"[159] Harcourt suggests, then, that we can read the farmer's demise as a product of his

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[156] Ibid. 26.
[157] More specifically, this anti-coordination game is simply called "chicken" as any individual farmer is betting on every other farmer to "swerve" and produce less. See A.K. Dixit and B.J. Nalebuff, *Thinking Strategically*. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1991), 205-222.
[158] Ibid. 395.
[159] Ibid.

use of an almanac, as it "had prognosticated a crop failure and the farmer concurred in that reading of the signs, yet all the while the corn was moving resistlessly towards a plentiful harvest."[160] Harcourt's reading is especially instructive as it demands that we understand the farmer's despair over the market as a simultaneous despair over the sheer productivity of nature ("bounty"), i.e. over nature's capacity to produce an excess that exceeds the caloric demands of those who would consume it. However, Harcourt's work here also opens up another aspect of the epistemological framework by which an agent engages with markets, and, particularly in the case of farmers, as the play sets up a correlation between the farmer's state of being and the biotic accumulation of would-be capital. In other words, the problem with "plenty" (i.e. the market surplus that the farmer believes he will have to contend with at harvest) is that it could also be generated via inflationary trends as wages stagnated and rents rose (and population continued to rise). As Harcourt suggests, given the emendation, the farmer in *Macbeth* may be allowing his crops to continue to grow even after he has taken his own life. Historically, this may sound like a strange economic phenomenon, and it is, especially during a time when gleaning rights still existed; however, there additional image Shakespeare provides seems to, in a very dark way, validate the farmer's despair over the future. It serves as further evidence, that, following Berger, there is something rotten in Scotland and it's the crops in the fields.

In Macbeth's second meeting with the sisters (IV.i), he asks them to explain why Scotland itself has become a natural disaster, especially such that such that "bladed corn be lodged" (77). How has this state of affairs come to exist? "Lodging," in contemporary agriculture entails the permanent bending of the stem of a plant; however, it does not entail the utter destruction of the plant as a harvestable commodity, although it can certainly affect

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[160] Ibid.

yields.[161] This is compounded by a textual problem in that, as one commentator notes, Shakespeare probably meant "bearded" instead of "bladed" as "bladed" and "lodged" are mutually exclusive with regards to the ontology of the plant: as S. Beisly writes, "[he] certainly knew that corn is not *lodged* by the wind before it is in the ear or *bearded*, and it is not likely that he would have written *bladed*, which is a word signifying *corn in its young state*."[162] Given that the weather could potential diminish the yield of an already-ripe crop, it is strange that the grain is described as being ripe *and* unharvested in what seems to be an oncoming stormy season, thus making the expedition of its harvest, *qua* event that generates income, even more urgent (this however, could be equally tragic if one calls for an emergency harvest and then it stops raining and the price plunges). It could be argued, furthermore, that this paradoxical reality would seem utterly bizarre to an audience that was experiencing "a period of rapid inflation bracketed by two periods of agricultural stagnation, even famine[.]"[163] It may also be interesting then to speculate also that the "bladed corn" could refer back to the Porter's farmer as well, thus uniting the tragic consequences of an astrological "misinterpretation" with something *impossible*, a commodity left to rot in the fields during a period of steadily rising prices.

This question over price also carries over into the problem over the privatization of ever-increasing amounts of labor by larger farms as the market became more and more unstable for the small tenant farmer. This phenomenon, driven by the exponential rise in population, led to a massive problem of unemployment as the price of labor fell and land prices soared, leaving many detached from the land from which they had relied on for sustenance farming. *Macbeth* manages to distill this process into a single scene, when, in III.i, Macbeth meets with Banquo's soon-to-be

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[161] Baker et. al, "Lodging of winter barly (*Hordeum vulgare* L.) in relation to its degree of exposure to sulfur dioxide," *New Phytologist*. Vol. 114. No. 2. (February 1990), 191.
[162] S. Beisly, *Notes and Queries*. (London: Bell and Daldy, 1860), 459.
[163] R. O. Bucholz and Newton Key, *Early Modern England: 1485-1714*. (London: Blackwell, 2009), 222.

murderers, attempting to convince them that it was, in fact, Banquo's "heavy hand" (90), and not

his own that "beggared" (91) the desperate men. Macbeth's double-dealing allows us to witness

the conversion of manorial labor to wage labor, for if the men had originally been working for

Macbeth (which the play seems to suggest), then he is essentially trying to *hire* the tenants he

forced off the land – a "primitive" conversion of the working day *par excellence*.[164] The often

violent, post-feudal re-tooling of the productive capacities of the population is in a strange way

perverted in the play, because it implies that landless, "masterless" men can be easily

incorporated into a wage system (they continue to work for him). Indeed, one of the most

anxiety-inducing aspects of daily life in early modern Britain was the concern over vagabondage,

which many thought was synonymous with criminality[165] (more broadly, as Linda Woodbridge

argues, this era witnesses the birth of the "criminalization of poverty" itself[166]). Population

growth and the depopulating enclosure thus created a space parallel to the search for labor and

the loss of land, a space that came to be occupied by everything from the underemployed to

black markets (a market that the murderers themselves embody).[167] However, the situation

presented in *Macbeth* is more complex since the land seems to present a theatre for labor

("bladed corn"), but seems to lack a labor force to generate market values, a situation, as I noted,

which is all the more horrific in that food is available, but apparently inaccessible. As Keith

Wrightson notes, periods of dearth "threw into stark relief the gross disparities which existed in

the distribution of an expanding national income" and the balance between foreign and domestic

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[164] "What the capitalist system demanded was the reverse of this [anti-enclosure policies under Henry VII]: a degraded and almost servile condition of the mass of the people, their transformation into *mercenaries*, and the transformation of their means of labor into capital." Karl Marx. *Capital*. Vol. 1. Trans. Ben Fowkes. (New York: Penguin Books, 1976), 880-1. Italics mine.
[165] *Earthly Necessities*, 148.
[166] Quoted in Louis Feuer, "Hired for Mischief: The Masterless Man in Macbeth" *Macbeth: New Critical Essays*. Ed. Nick Moschovakis. (New York: Routledge, 2008), 152.
[167] See Christopher Hill. *The World Turned Upside-Down*: *Radical Ideas During the English Revolution*. (New York: Penguin, 1972), 39-56.

markets did not level out until imports and exports stabilized in the 1620's.[168] Consequently, the

years surrounding the turn of the 17th century saw an increase in "social polarization"[169] – as the

population continued to rise, it became more difficult for younger generations to get a foothold

on the land, thus leading to an increase in the economy's reliance on wage labor.[170] As R.H.

Tawney put it, "the economic ideal of most…was less the opening of avenues to enterprise than

the maintenance of groups and communities at their customary level of prosperity."[171]

Once again, however, this disorganization is not simply a product of Macbeth's short

reign (as evidenced by Banquo's references to the recent murder of the king at the beginning of

III.i), and it certainly possible that his problems with these "employees" preceded his murder of

the king. I stress this point because it appears that the value of different kinds of labor has

diminished in the Scotland the play presents. This devaluation is not simply a problem related to

wages and the movement of the economy, but also a devaluation of social capital whereby one

member of the society "signifies" to others as a producer or possessor of certain kinds of

knowledge.[172] In *Macbeth*, this problem arises most notably in I.iv. as social capital in the play

should amount to one's capacity to annihilate one's military enemies (and thereby gain

recognition). However, this is undermined in I.iv when Duncan breaks tanistry laws and names

Malcolm his heir, a decision that instantly devalues the strength that Macbeth exerts to attain

recognition. In fact, the description of Macbeth and Banquo's onslaught in I.ii seems to suggest a

kind of inflationary model within this system of recognition such that they have to "doubly-

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[168] *Earthly Necessities*, 200.
[169] *Earthly Necessities: Economic Lives in Early Modern Britain*. (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2000), 200.
[170] Keith Wrightson. "A Polarizing Society." <oyc.yale.edu/history/histr-251/lecture-13>
[171] Quoted in *Earthly Necessities*, 57.
[172] As Pierre Bourdieu puts it, "Social capital is the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition – or in other words, to membership in a group – which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectively-owned capital, a 'credential' which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word." "The Forms of Capital," *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*. Ed. J. Richardson. (New York: Greenwood, 1986), 248-9.

redouble" their "strokes" (38) to compensate for what seems to amount to the devaluation of military labor. (We might also say that this loss of return on violence in the upper-orders corresponds to the idea that the lower agrarian orders handed their efforts in small-scale farming to the curse of diminishing returns.) In terms of the labor/recognition differential between them, a sociologist might say that the filial bond between Duncan and Macbeth has essentially devolved into a "patron-client" relationship:

> The two partners to a patron-client relationship no longer exchange equivalent goods and services. The offerings of the patron are more immediately tangible. He provides…protection against both the legal and illegal extractions of authority. The client, in turn, pays back in more intangible assets. These are, first, demonstrations of esteem…A second contribution by the client to his patron is offered in the form of information on the machinations of others. A third form of offering consists in the promise of political support…The client is duty-bound not merely to offer expressions of loyalty, but also to demonstrate that loyalty.[173]

The irony here, of course, is that the roles have become reversed as Duncan finds himself more and more in debt to Macbeth, as he is coming to rely on him to offer "tangible" services in lieu of his inflationary compensation. After murdering him, however, Macbeth retires from his labors, choosing instead to hire it out. Violence, as the premium Scottish social and political capital, becomes outsourced: following the model he establishes with the tenants/murderers, Macbeth retools the military into a system of "mercenary" labor that is divorced from the land that originally served to guarantee its ordering within the social structure, as we know that by the end of the play, Macbeth's military force is composed of "wretched kerns" (V.viii.17) and those

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[173] Eric R. Wolf, "Kinship, Friendship, and Patron-Client Relations in Complex Societies," *Social Anthropology of Complex Societies*. (New York: Routledge, 2004), 16-7.

that "move only in command,/Nothing in love" (V.iii.19-20). The "love" Shakespeare relates

here is indexed specifically to this idea of social capital, something that apparently neither the

Scottish soldiers nor their Irish counterparts have access to in the Scottish state. It is as if, since

Duncan failed to officially validate that which was most valuable to the state (Macbeth's

superhuman defensive capabilities), Scotland is plunged into an alternate system of cultural

credit, one that ultimately evacuates the entire state as the limbs of the body politic sever

themselves and head south. Such axiological destabilization within the social structure heralds

the death of violence as an organizing social principle.

Remembering to remember the Porter, I would like to conclude our discussion of his

revels by examining his drunkenness *in itself* as a piece of economic data (and not simply an

aspect of his discourse on equivocation). His drunkenness in and of itself has implications for the

economic reality of the play and it corresponds to the concern in early modern England over the

use of surpluses in the malting process. During times of dearth – a state of affairs that I have

labored to prove is an economic product linked to the political dysfunction of the Scottish state –

local governments attempted to suppress the malting of barley and the hoarding of supplies of

beer, noting that high prices and poverty were products of "the innholders, victuallers, and

chandlers…who receive from brewers into their houses a greater quantities of beer than

necessarily is requisite, in that they have and continue at all times provision beforehand for six

months or more, whereas if they had store only but for one month it would save as much corn as

would serve for the expense of five months."[174] This concern mirrors the concern we raised

earlier over supply and public perception in the case of the Levant Company's provisioning of

supplies for its overseas adventures; however, in the case of the Porter we can recognize a

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[174] Quoted in Alan Everitt, "The Marketing of Agricultural Produce," *The Agrarian History of England and Wales*.
Vol. IV 1500-1640. Ed. Joan Thirsk. (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press),

neighborhood-level regulatory system that existed in early modern England which targeted sin (*qua* excess) as a corollary to dearth and prices. As John Downame wrote, "the Lord punisheth drunkards…for because in the time of plenty they take too much, and so abuse his creatures (viz. corn), he bringeth upon them in the time of dearth and famine a proportionable punishment, that they shall not have enough."[175] The Porter's drunkenness in the scene is then "proportionate" to the price fluctuation it generates within the market, a logic that allows neighbors to vent rage at a member of the community who is both sinning and consuming what would, in the future, amount to a surplus, a buffer against the caloric environment.

The emerging concern, however, over hyper-consumption and the provisioning of supplies for adventurers also reveals an epistemology that is in transition as we have move out of the mixed, post-feudal system of landowners, tenants, and their attendant nomological system of *custom* ("a sort of great collective bargain"[176]) that guaranteed access to rights of common (pasture, estover, pannage, gleaning, waste) and into a more atomized schema whereby individual, private consumption becomes problematic due to the sheer density of public (mostly urban) consumption and the simultaneously "polarizing" effects of massive, government-protected private earnings coupled with the stagnant wages we explored above. As John Walter and Keith Wrightson put it, "For the primacy of local need over individual profit, the obligations of neighborliness and the traditional interpretation of customary rights were being increasingly denied by a significant element in local society"; furthermore, "to deny such obligations in conditions of dearth, however, was to risk making manifest the hostilities latent within a situation of accelerating social and economic differentiation."[177] In other words, the steady erosion of the

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[175] Quoted in John Walter and Keith Wrightson, "Dearth and the Social Order in Early Modern England," *Past & Present*. No. 71. (May 1976), 28.

[176] R.H. Tawney, *The Agrarian Problem in the Sixteenth Century*. (London: Longmans, 1912), 128

[177] "Dearth and the Social Order in Early Modern England," *Past & Present*. No. 71. (May 1976), 24.

customary system, along with the massive population increase and its attendant "price

revolution," seem to have converted neighborliness into a series of zero-sum games[178] (e.g. the

"first witch's" interactions with the captain's wife) as members of the community sought to

locate the object(s) cause of their misfortunes – it is not without good reason that many historians

read the same period in time as being in conjunction with the rise of witchcraft accusations.[179]

We might read the Porter's late-night cavalcade of sinners as precisely this mode of location in

that it selects members of the community who are then coupled to the violence that has just

occurred onstage, as if they are as complicit as Macbeth is creating the hell that the Porter claims

to be inhabiting. I would like to suggest that, in addition to the populist rage we explored in the

case of the attack on the captain and his wife, the accumulative practices the Porter examines

seem to reveal a mode of profit-making (i.e. as an end in and of itself) that is either unavailable

to the lower orders or is simply not a moral option. This last point is underscored by the *place* the

Porter imagines himself inhabiting, a hell created by "unnatural" means of production, an image

that was associated with popular protest movements in England in the 17th century. In 1621, for

instance, a group of tenants involved in a border dispute in the northwest staged a play at Kendal

Castle in which they "did therein make a representacion of Hell and in the same did personate

and acte manie Lordes of the Mannors."[180] In this sense, the Porter's dramatic rendering of

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[178] "In the husbandman and cornemonger, there is exceeding injustice, in hording up graine till the time of further ad vantage: and in taking whatsoever they can get for their own, though it be to the shedding of the blood of the poore." William Perkins, *A Treatise of the Vocations or Callings of Men* (1612). Quoted in James Davis, *Medieval Market Morality: Life, Law and Ethics in the English Marketplace, 1200-1500*. (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2012), 416.
[179] See, for instance, Brian Levack, "The End of Witch Trials," *The Witchcraft Reader*. Ed. Darren Oldridge. (New York: Routledge, 2002), 373-386. For a explanation of the decline of witch trials with regards to the implementation of the Poor Laws, see Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 695-6.
[180] Quoted in John Walter, "Public Transcripts, Popular Agency and the Politics of Subsistence in Early Modern England." *Negotiating Power in Early Modern Society: Order, Hierarchy, and Subordination in Britain and Ireland*. (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2001), 131

Scotland's lower orders in and of itself may be part of the discourse of popular protest, a means of *representing* clamor.

To conclude this section, I would like to read the darkness of the play as both a corollary to the dearth of economic and social capital in the play. Fortuitously, to accomplish this, we can start with the last of the Porter's imaginary entrants. In this last bit of play-acting, we see how the social anger directed towards those withholding surpluses from the market also extends to the textile industry. The Porter's hell-bound haberdasher has "come [t]hither for stealing out of a French hose" (13): he subtracts a surplus out of his wares and manages to delude his customers until the style changes and tight-fitting hose become the popular fashion.[181] As Robert I. Lublin writes, "In the early modern imagination, cloth represented English virtue, but it also was understood to inspire vice in the Englishmen who prepared it for sale."[182] We might say, then, that this notion of virtue with regard to textile finishing services was not just a professional virtue, but an aspect of national identity, one that was grounded on a centuries-old competition with the Low Counties over the quality of their finishing skills. England's wool exports had fallen off drastically in 1551 (partly as a result of its own "glutting" of foreign markets[183]). Although wool prices did not stabilize for another 20 years, the market did become more diverse as The "New Draperies" of the early 17th century (with the help of imported Protestant Dutch labor[184]) helped to establish a stronger industry based on finished cloth. It is in this context that we encounter the Porter's tailor, as he has "stolen from clothing that properly belongs to another."[185] Popular audiences of the play (notably East-Anglians) may have registered negative

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[181] See *Macbeth*. Ed. Eugene W. Wraith. (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1954), 107.
[182] *Costuming the Shakespearean Stage: Visual Codes of Representation in Early Modern England*. (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2011), 117.
[183] *Earthly Necessities*, 155.
[184] *Earthly Necessities*, 166.
[185] "I Pray You Remember the Porter," 394.

feelings with regards to these members of the textile industry as the wool market had not yet recovered and the demand for finished English fashions became increasingly popular among the upper and merchant classes.[186] More importantly for our purposes, however, the "vice" inherent to the finishing business resided, is, to a certain degree, on its theater of operation as the draper who stretches the material to deceive a customer "darkens his shop so that [they] cannot see the poor quality of the work."[187] In this sense, the tailor's crime relates specifically to the chromatic *topos* of the play it appears in. It also helps to cement the connection between *withholding* and darkness, a trope that the play labors to establish as it relates back to the encounter with the captain's wife withholding of chestnuts and the withholding of titles that helps set in motion its violent eponym.

As is often noted, the play is dominated by the sounds of thunder and the sun either doesn't rise or doesn't ever seem to rise at the correct time (a problem I will argue, later, that Malcolm is correcting at the end of the play when he restores the *physis* of Scotland: its "measure, time, and place"). What is apparent, however, is that things don't grow, or at least don't grow to fruition in *Macbeth*: Duncan is certainly unable to harvest the "seeds" he plants in I.iv,[188] and it is clear through the scene with the bladed corn that the carrying capacity of the land has been violated in some way, a problem that the lord in III.vi relates to Lennox, in his anticipation that the ensuing military campaign will restore food to the "tables" of Scotland (34). This notion, however, of a sterile or decimated *oikos* extends beyond the physical description of plants, as the air quality ("fog and filthy air," I.i.13) in the play is indexed with the civil warfare

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[186] *Costuming the Shakespearean Stage*, 117.
[187] Ibid.
[188] "The earth is the primitive, savage unity of desire and production. For the earth is not merely the multiple and divided object of labor, it is also the unique, indivisible entity, the full body that falls back on the forces of production and appropriates them for its own as the natural or divine precondition…it is the surface on which the whole process of production is inscribed, on which the forces and means of labor are recorded, and the agents and the products distributed." Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. *Anti-Oedipus*. Trans. Robert Hurley et al. (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 2003), 140-1.

that is taking place in the distance: the blighted landscape corresponds to a de-generative

Scotland, in which agriculture, both in terms of husbandry and accessibility to markets, has been

decimated due to the polluting effects of 11th century tanistry laws and the violence inherent to

them. The restriction of access to the land is a fundamentally early modern English problem,

however, and it is though this lens that I suggest we read the other atmospheric conditions of the

play as *Macbeth* is traditionally (and rightly so) read as a *dark* play, both in the literal and

figurative sense of the word. In accordance with this chromatic trope, I think it is prudent to read

this darkness *ecologically* as the play begins in the darkness of Duncan's reign (the "hurly-burly"

is bookended by stage directions at the beginning of I.i. and I.iii note thunder and/or lightning)

and does not seem to abate throughout, and, in this sense, we might read it as a trope that defines

not simply Macbeth's reign, but the state in general: darkness is not just an effect of *Macbeth's*

actions, but an exacerbation of what was already in effect during Duncan's *reign*. As II.ii reveals,

even before Duncan's murder, Banquo comments both on how dark the night is, but also on the

discrepancy between the time and its chromatic, nocturnal index. In this sense, as I suggested

above, it is as if the physics of the play has already began to dismantle itself, a chaos that is

explicated in the opening lines of the play when the sisters' debate over whether to meet "in

thunder, lightning, or in rain" (I.i.2), three aspects of nature that are rarely mutually exclusive.

However, the darkness of the play also has other economic implications that relate

specifically to aspects of early modern culture that we have explored above, in that the darkness

of *Macbeth* refers to the loss of solar power, the ultimate *commons*. The play links the

"enclosure" of this resource to the lack of a regulation as it emerges as a trope during the war

with which the play opens and extends into Macbeth's reign. (In this sense, the state "natural," in

that sovereignty functions as an epistemological network that guarantees the circulation of

energy and serves to preserve and improve the ecology of caloric being by protecting productive spaces and those that are stewards of them.) This eclipse of common usage by private ends, as we saw in chapter one, was partly a product of the engrossing measures that sought to consolidate large manorial holdings and convert small tenant holdings into wage labor. These procedures block tenants and families from any commonly held access to the sun's energy. We might say enclosure privatizes the energy of the sun by only directing it at land that has been consolidated into profit-based economy.

IV. STATE AND ANTI-STATE TERROR IN *MACBETH*

Relation with the anomalous is one of alliance.

- Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*

Apart from Terry Eagleton's brief argument in *William Shakespeare* that posits the witches as "the true heroes of the play,"[189] the notion that the witches in Macbeth are viable political agents with some sort of protagonistic function has not been taken very seriously (although, one could posit, as Ivo Kamps does, that Eagleton doesn't either[190]). Eagleton (rightly so) posits that the hierarchical values of Scottish society have devolved into "routine oppression and incessant warfare," which thereby elicits a malicious response from a group of "radical separatists." [191] However, the problem with Eagleton's argument, as Kamps notes, is that he fails to outline the specific socioeconomic context of the witches' actions. In the reading that follows, I will attempt to expand our outline the weird sisters' social position and professional activities. If I have formulated it correctly in the previous section of this chapter, I think there is ample evidence to prove that the weird sisters are participating in the political economy of Scotland, particularly its

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[189] *William Shakespeare.* (Oxford and New York: Blackwell, 1986), 8.

[190] "An investigation into the social position of the witches in English Renaissance culture (there is a considerable amount of information on the subject) could potentially verify Eagleton's shrewd reading of the play; but he never bothers, preferring to read the play in the context of certain unsubstantiated generalizations about the displacement of counter-hegemonic social values onto a group of socially marginalized creatures – the witches." Ivo Kamps "Materialist Shakespeare: An Introduction". *Materialist Shakespeare: A History*. Ed. Ivo Kamps. (London: Verso Books, 1995), 18.

[191] Ibid.

reliance upon the corresponding occult economy that the sisters represent. By culling the economic data that surrounds the sisters and the lower orders in the play, this will allow for a more nuanced reading of the political significance of their interactions with Macbeth as I attempt to correlate their efforts to semiotically manipulate the state with the data we explored above. Put differently, since we have established an economic motive, we will be able to move away from more traditional readings of the role of "evil" in the play and understand the meeting on the heath and the subsequent political debacle as an experiment that attempts to consolidate *terror* within the official structure(s) of Scottish sovereignty. In this section, we will first attempt to theorize what exactly we might mean in terms of state and anti-state terror during the period and it should serve as a companion to the concepts of terror that I explored in chapter one with regard to neighborhood-level terror – as I will stress throughout this chapter, since terror is always reflexive with regards to its own proliferation, then any systematization of its usage within, parallel, or even outside of physical coercion, must consider it in terms of *scale*. After identifying why the sisters, in turn, identify Macbeth as a potential solution to the civil, social, and economic disaster that has developed under Duncan's rule, we will then proceed to extend our previous discussion of epistemological violence as I attempt to consider the implications of the sisters' tactics with regards to their use of epistemologically-based strategies of terror and control. Close attention, then, will be paid to the role of political prophecy and its capacity to manipulate pre-existing socioeconomic structures (*le savoir-faire de faire-savoir*). The section will then conclude with an extended consideration of how Macbeth's rule, as the Glamisean Candidate, plays out, with particular attention paid to how and why the sisters, under Hecate, attempt to undo the eschatological time-bomb they have strapped to the Scottish state.

One Person's Witch is Another's Consulting Firm

If, as I am suggesting, Macbeth becomes the homeopathic dose of terror that the Scottish

state needs, then his absolutism must be read as a chiasmic reflection of the violence that the

state is lacking. I will argue that the sisters' commandeering of Macbeth's capacity to instill

terror is an elaborate political experiment in negotiating the limits of absolutist rule as its nucleus

is constituted via an unequivocal nomological *fear* of the king's divine authority. Concordantly,

if state terror has any corollary within the early modern English political economy it is within the

context of a paranoiac, tyrannical rule (in fact, Bodin's schema for tyranny in *The Six Books of*

the Commonwealth almost mirrors the plot of the play as he claims that, post-usurpation, "those

who by force or fraud seized sovereign power soon found that their lives were exposed to the

vengeance of their rivals, and were compelled for their own safety to employ foreigners as a

bodyguard, and to build great fortresses as a refuge"[192]). In a sense, absolutism takes Derrida's

notion of "making-known" to the extreme, as it posits a single referent for any kind of public

disorder or crime. This is historically significant as public order becomes more and more of a

concern for a society that is undergoing a massive economic retooling.[193] As the example of

bodily mutilation so viscerally illustrated in the previous section, the physical marking of the

order-less Other serves as a means by which to disseminate this terror through the body politic as

set of signifiers that index bodily pain with order via the "spectacle" of punishment.[194]

Absolutism, as we will read it, becomes the juridical phenotype for Macbeth's military genotype

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[192] Jean Bodin, *The Six Books of the Commonwealth*. Trans. M.J. Tooley. (New York: Macmillan, 1955), 61.
[193] "Local communities were penetrated ever more deeply by a process of administrative and cultural integration which brought into them national standards and fashions." Anthony Fletcher and John Stevenson, "Introduction," *Order and Disorder in Early Modern England*. Ed. Anthony Fletcher and John Stevenson. (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1985), 3.
[194] See Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Trans. Alan Sheridan. (New York: Vintage Books, 1977).

as the violence necessary to maintaining order becomes socketed ("designated") into a position that amplifies it and channels its movement inward. In this sense, we will see how the notion of terror in the play goes up and down, as the play becomes, to use William F. May's terms, a "siege of terror" that sets off a "regime of terror."[195] Furthermore, we will debate how much of the latter is intentional on the part of the sisters as the play seems to present a set of ambiguities that question whether or not Macbeth's "ends" (III.v.13) and theirs are one and the same as Macbeth's violence threatens to consume itself.

As a consequence of this dynamic, it will become incumbent for us to examine the tactics of terror in the play as we will attempt to understand how the sisters' use of prophecy and image-magic serve to propel this experiment in absolute authority ahead. As stated, since this mode of political violence relies on a certain distance between the actors and the intended effects, we will want to explore how the sisters' medium is integral to their message as their use of prophecy, in particular, relies on a notion of control that operates from afar. This action-at-a-distance represents the critical content of their clamor as it expresses specifically what they are hoping to alter within the political economy as sovereignty does not exhaust itself in enunciating its power before the body politic; if this becomes necessary, there is no such thing as sovereignty, but perpetual civil war. In this sense, the Scottish state has become completely reliant on massively expensive and physically eminent means by which to instill terror within the Hobbesean nightmare that has become 11th century Scotland – there is no "husbandry" to its sovereignty:

> In such condition there is no place for industry, because the fruit thereof is uncertain, and
> consequently, no culture of the earth, no navigation, nor use of the commodities that may
> be imported by the sea, no commodious building, no instruments of moving or removing

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[195] See W.G. May, "Terrorism as Strategy and Ecstasy," *Social Research*. Vol. 41. (Summer 1974), 277-298.

such things as require much force, *no knowledge of the face of the earth*, no account of

time, no arts, no letters, no society[.][196]

In this sense, it can be argued that Hobbes' account of sovereignty can be read as not simply

some draconian theory of unbridled power, but rather, a means by which to understand how

power not only punishes, but also *enables* the free movement of subjects and goods across and

beyond the state (*nomos*).[197] I have highlighted this phrase, "no knowledge of the face of the

earth," because it speaks to the local *gnosis* that we have seen as a weapon whereby political

insurgents may reverse the slack in regulation. Duncan's regime seems to regard the clean-up

process as more significant than a notion of sovereignty that would operate *legitimately.* As

Weber suggests, we can gauge this legitimacy by attending to the *imperative control* at work

within, in this case, the state, wherein "the *probability* that a command with a given specific

content will be obeyed by a given group of persons."[198] This notion becomes problematic for

Duncan's regime as the use of "state violence, which may be justified, suggests that the state

lacks sufficient legitimacy to gain citizen compliance through non-coercive power."[199] In other

words, violence is always problematic to the ontology of sovereignty, both passively and

actively; however, there is no productive economy without the political economy by which a

regime *secures* the territory wherein it produces its subsistence and its surpluses, which, for

Scotland, means that there can be no economy at all, or at least no economy for those bound to

what amounted to neatly plowed battlefields. Concordantly, as T.P Thornton writes, "by showing

the weaknesses in this framework, the insurgents demonstrate, not only their own strength and

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[196] *Leviathan*. Ed. Edwin Curley. (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1994), 76. [italics mine]

[197] "States always have the same composition; if there is even one truth in the political philosophy of Hegel, it is that every State carries within itself the essential movements of its existence. States are made up not only of people but also of wood, fields, gardens, animals, and commodities. There is a unity to the *composition* of all States, but States have neither the same *development* nor the same *organization*." Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 385.

[198] Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*. Trans. A.M. Henderson and Talcott Parsons. (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1947), 152.

[199] "The Politics of Terrorism: Power, Legitimacy, and Violence," *Integral Review*. Vol. 6. No. 1. (March 2010), 5.

the weakness of the incumbents but also the inability of the society to provide support for its members in a time of crisis."[200] In this sense, as we shall see, the sisters' deployment of Macbeth comes to embody the *cogito/protego* dialectic that Schmitt describes as the phenomenon whereby a populace becomes unable to secure contracts (and thereby an economy): eventually "the terror of the state of nature drives anguished individuals together; their fear rises to an extreme; a spark of reason…flashes; and suddenly there stands in front of [them] a new god."[201] I will argue that the sisters recognize this protective divinity in Macbeth as he is obviously in possession of a quanta of terror that might ensure the nomological action-at-a-distance, a *sense* of order that would be built into the epistemology of the political body – tacit, parsimonious, *everywhere*.

Given this concern over an over-arching sense of order, riot during the early modern period was not a desire for anarchy,[202] especially but the implementation of the law such that the rebellion in itself is unnecessary. As Keith Wrightson writes of the anti-enclosure rebellions of the 1530's, "They represented not the desperate spasms of an oppressed and immiserated peasantry, but the truculent resistance of self-confident manorial communities determined to fend off any encroachment upon the customary rights which secured their relatively advantageous position."[203] I contend that this formulation is, however, still applicable within the situation of terror; however, we must be careful to formulate its goals within a moral index by which the duality of violent political action (means vs. ends) is understood as a desire to restore the sense of movement, *haecceity* ("thisness") that was the body politic and the sum of its productive

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[200] Quoted in Grant Wardlaw, *Political Terrorism: Theory, Tactics, and Counter-Measures*. (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1982), 10.

[201] *The Leviathan in the State Theory of Thomas Hobbes: Meaning and Failure of a Political Symbol*. Trans. George Schwab and Erna Hilfstein. (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2008), 31.

[202] "Those who argued that the king possessed sovereignty were aware that he might use his powers against the public interest. Yet they held that if there were no sovereign, anarchy would inevitably result, - and tyranny was better than anarchy." J.P. Somerville, *Politics and Ideology in England*, 38

[203] Keith Wrightson, *Earthly Necessities*, 152.

interactions. As May writes, "here there are two possibilities: one type of terrorist makes an appeal to a higher justice that governs all things; the other is nihilistic…the first is convinced there is an order, a *nomos*, a justice that overarches all powers."[204]

Just as the structure of political violence tends towards binaries, the sisters' relation of off-stage violence (I.iii) sets up an instructive parallel between their reportage of neighborhood attacks and the reportage of the scenes of carnage and butchery in scene two as the two sets of events were, apparently, occurring in tandem. This parallel reveals a friction between the lower and higher orders with regards to the legitimacy of violence (and its privileged means of delivery), as if *malefic*a and warfare are posited as policing mechanisms by which the respective social strata communicate with themselves juridically. Furthermore, this overlap in differential legitimacy serves to secure the sisters' attack on the captain as a mode of political violence whereby non-governmental agents attempt to *punish* a couple for their complicity in early modern, zero-sum, mercantilist economy.[205] (Modern scholars of terrorism may see here a parallel between these acts and the Groupe Islamique Armé's violent efforts to eradicate apostate *kuffar* in Algeria in the 1990's.[206])

In early modern England, the slippage surrounding the metaphysics of terror was built into the notion of magic itself as a service. As Thomas writes, the belief in malefica, for instance, was the "logical corollary of the equally widespread possibility in the belief of beneficent magic.

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[204] "Terrorism as Strategy and Ecstasy," *Social Research*. Vol. 41. (Summer 1974), 291.

[205] Robert B. Ekelund and Robert D. Tollison, *Mercantilism as a Rent-Seeking Society: Economic Regulation in Historical Perspective*. (College Station: Texas A&M Univ. Press, 1981), 9. "Our merchants and master-manufacturers complain much of the bad effects of high wages in raising the price, and thereby lessening the sale of their goods both at home and abroad. They say nothing concerning the bad effects of high profits. They are silent with regard to the pernicious effects of their own gains. They complain only of those of other people." Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of The Wealth of Nations*. Ed. Edwin Cannan. (New York: Modern Library, 1937), 98.

[206] See Vahid Brown, "Classical and Global Jihad: Al-Qa'ida's franchising frustrations." *Fault Lines in Global Jihad: Organizational, Strategic, and Ideological Fissures*. Ed. Assaf Moghadam and Brian Fishman. (New York: Routledge, 2011), 99-102.

The 'good' witch who helped a client to triumph over and opponent in law or love, or who cured him by transferring his disease to another person, might well be regarded as a 'bad' one by the injured party."[207] To the 21st century ear, reversibility operating here might bear a striking resemblance to the logic of the oft-quoted, "One person's terrorist is another's freedom fighter."[208] As Feisal G. Mohamed writes, "the trite aphorism does, however, offer one important insight through its double possessive: the life of the terrorist is always already written and incorporated into an existing demonology or hagiography."[209] Concordantly, the local magician's actions are defined by the way they register and oscillate between the poles of moral permissibility and violation. In many cases, however, "a witchcraft accusation was more plausible, for example, when levied against a person who already had a reputation for magical prowess as a white witch or cunning person."[210] In this sense, the operator's status as a *professional* is continually weighed against the information they circulated through local populations, a dangerous position indeed, as typically "they knew too much about the conflicts and suspicions latent within a small community."[211] Just as the disease in Thomas' example is not dissolved, but transferred altogether elsewhere, magic functions as it still does in parts of present-day Africa[212] – a solution to an epistemological problem within a closed system.[213]

Witchcraft accusations, then, are the logical end of the "socially standardized nightmare" that the

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[207] *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 520.
[208] The axiom first appears in Gerald Seymour. *Harry's Game.* (New York: Random House, 1975), 62.
[209] *Milton and the Post-Secular Present: Ethics, Politics, Terrorism*. (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 2011), 107.
[210] *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 677.
[211] Ibid. 290.
[212] This theory, popular in studies on African witchcraft, seeks to illustrate how societies cope with the inexplicable. Like Evans-Pritchard's formulation of Zande witchcraft beliefs as a means of accounting for the meaning of the accident, Marwick's notion of strain explains how a witchcraft accusation rises to the surface of local discontent as means of maintaining social organization. See Max Marwick, *Sorcery and its Social Setting*: *A Study of the Northern Rhodesian Ceŵa.* (Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 1965).
[213] "In a society technologically more backward than ours the immediate attractions of the belief in witchcraft is not difficult to understand. It served as a means of accounting for otherwise inexplicable misfortunes of daily life. Unexpected disasters – the sudden death of a child, the loss of a cow, the failure of some routine household task – all could, in default of any more obvious explanation, be attributed to the influence of some malevolent neighbor." *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 638.

witch-figure comes to represent: a complete loss over the circulation of information. Witchcraft accusations, in a sense, function like epistemological skimmingtons within the structure of the neighborhood.

As we saw in chapter one, neighborhood-level terror functions within a field of signs whereby political anger can be leveled at a neighborhood by turning that field upside-down and having it rain semiotic terror down on its victims. This inversion enables the aggressor to utilize the medium of its own disenfranchisement, be it enclosed land or otherwise, as a *signature*: a circulation of the ur-terror she has experienced whereby the victim not only registers the effect itself, but also the vector from whence it was deployed. This signature is important because as it relies on a sense of recognition, something Cooper and other writers recognized that many of these tactics served to illustrate: a desire for sovereignty that is facilitated by the *faire-savoir* of terror itself, the epistemological signature (some believed her) that indicates that the victims/fellow subjects had come to *believe* in the power enunciated through the (speech) act itself. This notion of belief will become important in this section as we extend our discussion of Duncan's regime, as the political landscape seems to be entirely lacking the hard kernel of political terror that Hobbes describes as the inverse of the collective violence that is ceded to the sovereign. However, the universe of *Macbeth*, as we will see, is not entirely Hobbsean, as the sisters in the play seem to be retaining their states of nature as a means by which to police and punish the state that Duncan's regime has neglected to enclose within the terror of sovereign authority (the sisters, we might say, invert Schmitt's axiom: *non protego non obligo*). As we have seen, since Duncan (as the *head* of state) is unable to install this fear within the body politic, he is left to continually fight off the phantom limbs that fly off the body *qua* rebellion. In this sense, as I have suggested, the notion of terror with regards to Macbeth's usurpation is not

simply an *introduction* of political fear into the symbolic order, but a modification of the state of emergency that had been perpetuated by Duncan's headless rule.

By incorporating the data we compounded in the previous section, we will be able to read the Scottish political economy itself as a motive for the sisters' attack on the state. Concordantly, it will also lend greater political and tactical significance to their "trading and trafficking" with Macbeth, most notably their use of him as a proxy to retool Scottish sovereignty. This conception of political violence relies on similar structures as those that we explored in chapter one as it employs proxies that that become transmitted through the assemblages that the victim, as subject, becomes epistemologically attached to. This chapter will attempt to expand this logic by seeking to understand how neighborhood-level terror can be employed at the level of an anti-state attack, and in this sense, our conceptualization both changes in scale and intensity. However, the tactics employed retain the power of local knowledge(s) that serve to invert the relation between the target and its attendant topoaxiology. In *Macbeth*, the weyward sisters will utilize the state economy's chiasmic relationship with its occult economy against the state mechanism itself. In this sense, the sisters do not seek to install themselves as sovereigns, but are instead attempting to install terror within the Scottish *nomos* via assassination, what we might regard as a perverse draft of the designation theory of absolutism as sovereignty is, in a sense, the outlet of divine right that "designation" from the masses plugs the sovereign into.[214] In this sense, we will see how the sisters identify Macbeth as a potential solution to the recent civil and economic unrest – technically, they attempt to bring about an intra-military, guardian coup d'état as Macbeth, on a certain level, *is* the military.[215]

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[214] For an explication of the role of designation theory in the early Stuart reign, see J.P. Somerville, *Politics and Ideology in England 1603-1640.* (London: Longman Group, 1986), 22-7.
[215] "A guardian coup is where the military intervenes in order to rescue the state from civilian mismanagement. The men in uniform consider it their duty to replace their incompetent civilian predecessors. Under the military

IX. THE BEAST IN THE SOVEREIGN (CHAOS, PROGNOSTICATION, FAMILIAR)

The three sisters' use of what has been historically codified into a system of specifically English cunning practices and tactics serve to establish them as professional, but, as we have also seen, political actors within their local communities.[216] However, their disdain towards landowners and venture mercantilists seem to establish them as agents engaged in policing projects parallel to a dysfunctional national bureaucracy that is expending its resources on quelling rebellions while the arable surfaces of the earth are decimated by dearth, darkness, depopulation and warfare. We are explicitly reminded that sisters are involved in an effort to affect some sort of political or governmental change when, in III.v, after chastising her subordinates for not including her in their "trade and traffic with Macbeth" (III.v.4), Hecate states, regarding the latter: "he loves for his own ends, not for you" (13). *Ends*? – traditional criticism of the play expends a great deal of energy on explicating the play in terms of the quanta of "evil" the sisters inject into the atmosphere of the play,[217] atomizing their role in the causal frame of the play such that they wind up amounting to occult ornaments on a play about murder, ambition, and unreason. As we have seen from our reading of the interactions with the captain and his wife, the sisters seem to be involved in actions that seek to punish those who are profiting from state regulation, leaving the lower orders to fend for themselves during a time of civil violence. In turn, I will be an attempt to show how the economic data we explored above is deployed (qua motive) into a distinctively English milieu, one in which local occult professionals

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'guardians,' corruption and inefficiency are targeted, and politicians of the old regime are purged." Alex Thomson, *An Introduction to African Politics*. 3rd Ed. (New York: Routledge, 2010), 138. In the case of *Macbeth*, this model retains a similar structure, but with varying agents as a group of civilians attempts to use the stronger arm of the military to overthrow an incompetent military/state leader.

[216] See Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic.*

[217] See, for instance, J. Lyndon Stanley, "Macbeth: The Tragedy of Evil," *College English*. Vol. 22. No. 5. (Feb, 1961), 305-11; Dolora G. Cunningham, "Macbeth: The Tragedy of the Hardened Heart," *Shakespeare Quarterly*. Vol. 14. No. 1 (Winter, 1963), 39-47.

were pitted against monopolizing governments, who, as we have seen, were trying to legally restrict their activities while they themselves were relying on the same profession to provide consultation in these types of market ventures. Although, as I have suggested, the sisters' actions constitute as certain policing function, we must ask who it is they believe they have come to police on behalf of. Locating this correlation is difficult as the sisters occupy an ambiguous space in the Scottish state; however, as I have suggested, their political ambitions may be more active than they are representative, a formulation that, or course, lends credence to the reading of their actions as terroristic, notably as terror often claims to be restoring, as May suggested, an idea of order that is fundamentally absent. Concordantly, the sisters cannot be *representing* political action as their actions do not correspond to the society has rejected them in the first place. This does not mean, however, that they cannot be engaged in a project that fundamentally that seeks to change the nature of their relationship to the state that is ultimately responsible for the regulation of their society, a set of regulations that, as we have seen, were not equally enforced among members of the occult services industry. It is for this reason, then, that we may understand their actions as not exactly a representation of political desire, but a set of actions that corresponds to the social turmoil explicated by the Porter and the murderers, i.e. those who also experience injustice, but seem to have very little means by which to explicate it – at least in forms other than drunken play-acting and the solicitation of murder. What ties the witches' desires to the lower orders, then, is expressed in the experience of alterity within the state, which, as I have suggested, is brought about by the lack of civic and economic regulation – evils that are made clear by the Porter's hellish schema. The bet that the sisters will make with regard to how Macbeth will serve their "ends" is simultaneously a bet that Macbeth's actions will serve to secure a nomological space that is not so completely dependent on zero-sum games. This

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concern is voiced in the opening lines of the play when they remind the reader, that, in the society they exist within, one party's gain only ever comes at another's loss, a dynamic that cements an ideological connection between themselves and the Porter, all of whose examples illustrate these modes of zero-sum accumulation. Reading the supernatural elements of the play, then, as specific types of economic and political investments forces us to consider how *Macbeth* is always caught up in an economy of risk (i.e. bets on possible futures), from the grain market to sovereignty itself. Concordantly, we will read Macbeth himself as a bet on the future "state" of Scotland, a bet that the sisters place using political prophecy and misinformation, history itself as a narratological weapon.

Apprehensive to lend too much credence to the effects of the prophecy on the later, corresponding actions in the play, readings of the prognostication in I.iii quickly defer to the causal influence of Lady Macbeth and the "deep desires" (I.iv.51) of Macbeth himself. If, however, the sisters' (and the other members of the lower orders) seem to identify some sort of conflict within the state, then both Macbeth's desire *and* the state of Scotland's political economy must be considered as *systems* to which the prophecy becomes attached. In this sense, it doesn't matter if the prognostications (just like the curses in chapter one) actually causes A to do x: by simply disseminating a loaded piece of information (ex. *may God bring a plague your farm*) into an already preexisting mental and physical environment (stress about rising rent; resorting to feeding cow peas or chestnuts that may have turned, etc.), these initial conditions serve to, in some cases, induce the desired event within the state of the situation. Since the local knowledge accrued by the curser or prognosticator is, mathematically, simply a set of probabilities, we can posit that operators within the occult economy were able to understand the

local dynamic systems of gossip and hearsay.[218] In more technical terms, the dynamics of this

schema, which I am borrowing from concepts within chaos theory, suggest that prophecy

functions as a mathematical attractor within a political system that is sensitively dependent on

initial conditions ("the butterfly effect"). These conditions manifest a set of mathematical

probabilities whereby one can make mathematical predictions about how the dynamical system

will evolve over time (weather, for instance, becomes too "chaotic" to accurately predict at

approximately one week). I would suggest, then, that it is not a coincidence that Macbeth's

actions are indexed to weather patterns as he and the weather are subject to chaotic entropy, or

randomness as the systems become more complexly interactive: as mathematically chaotic

systems, politics and the weather slowly devolve into entropic violence as "the treasure/Of

Nature's germens tumble all together/Even till destruction sicken" (IV.i.81-2).

 Given the political environment of Scotland and the capacity for its thanes to rebel and

disrupt local economies, why do they come to choose Macbeth to enlist in their "ends"? They

announce that they are going to meet with him in I.i, disappear during I.ii, and then reappear to

divulge what happened in the cutaway – only after this debriefing do they actually "meet" (I.i.8).

But this meeting cannot be a meeting per se, as Macbeth does not seem to have been aware that

any such meeting was going to take place: for the sisters, it is a meeting; for Macbeth it is an

encounter. The diction here already serves to establish a power relation between the sisters and

Macbeth, as they have the upper-hand on him simply because they already *seem* to know what is

going to take place – this dynamic, however, it can be argued, may not be a product of

supernatural forces, but instead yet another example of how observational sensitivity to local

environments and public arenas of discourse can be used to manipulate the epistemology of the

intended interlocutor. (This power dynamic will continue to play itself out as the narrative

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[218] *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 402.

advances and we will come to see how Macbeth becomes more and more indebted to their services in prognostication, especially after the murder of Banquo.) The sisters' meeting/encounter could also be read as the initial interactions between members of the lower orders and a figure of authority as a clamor to officials can be described as meeting between those who want to meet and those who might have wanted to meet if they had known of the impetus for said meeting. In this sense, their meeting with Macbeth functions as a clamor, a protest that operates by immediately naming the alternative to the current political debacle – "Hail!" (I.iii.62; 63; 64) as *election*.

The idea that the sisters' meeting may function as a kind of clamor is evident in way that they describe their situation, using terms that seem to express their weariness ("hurly-burly," I.iii), a sentiment that is compounded by their reflections on the outcome of war. Concerning the latter, critics traditionally read "lost and won" (4) as a paradox which is easily overcome by understanding the opposition as a reference to the metaphysics of war, a concept whose *telos* requires both a winner and a loser. However, in keeping with my concerns over those who inhabit the theatre of that warfare, we should posit that war is never "won" by those who suffer its economic consequences in a pre-industrialized, agrarian civilization (*especially* if they're not on the winning side). Furthermore, as occult operators in a marginalized space, the sisters are not on any "side" that could have an army representing it. Why then have they come to choose Macbeth as a representative for their "ends"? I would like to suggest that the offstage violence in I.ii essentially dovetails their political projects as I.ii and the beginning of I.iii are composed of reportage of what these two groups of people are doing as political agents during I.ii. Just as Banquo and Macbeth are left to compensate for Duncan's ineptitude on a national level, the sisters are left to compensate for the same ineptitude on local level as Scotland's aristocracy is

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busy policing itself. The notion is solidified by the fact that contractual obligations between both the sisters' and the captain *and* Duncan and Macbeth have been broken in some sort grievous way that necessitates the inhuman rage directed at their enemies offstage in I.ii. Their anger is one of pure resentment that will soon evolve into to a more active anger, and this is precisely the function of their *meeting*, as it is not simply a cordial exchange, but a violent *convergence* of energies.

As I stated above, the occult economy trafficked in *agency*. Prognostication relied not so much on introducing new data into a client's matrix of possibilities, but, rather, pushing that matrix towards actualization *qua* action. The sisters recognize what Macbeth's power actually seems to entail for them as political agents as I am arguing that the entire play is organized around notions of security, both economic and civil, and that this is primarily a product of the epistemological overlap between 17th century England and 11th century Scotland that the play deliberately enacts by splicing the two worlds together. In this sense, the play seems to be asking if absolutism – in all its shock and awe – is a viable solution to the economic problems engendered through massive mercantile profit, bad harvests, and loss of social capital. Concordantly, *Macbeth* (and Macbeth), in I.iii, becomes a political project that explores the upper limits of this idea of absolution, especially in its capacity to guarantee security. In recognizing Macbeth's capacity for overkill, they decide to use him as proxy by which to assassinate Duncan. Furthermore, it can be argued that part of their recognition of Macbeth is also a recognition of how the recent political system of usurpation can be used to their advantage. The problem with Scotland, we might say, is not simply a problem of this cycle of usurpation in itself, but the incapacity for that usurper to solidify order as tacit sovereignty, the action-at-a-distance we discussed above that is utterly lacking in Duncan's regime. Their

prognostications to Macbeth (and Banquo) are, as I am arguing, an attempt to overwrite one mode of terror with another, to *elect* Macbeth king by installing that pure violence at the top of a political structure that itself corresponds to a hierarchy of violence, social capital generated by its members' capacity to kill *en masse*. Here again we are encountering a kind of systematic knowledge (*election*), that, like the *malefica* we explored in chapter one, attempts to use axiological *milieux* back against themselves in order to accomplish some sort of political end – the medium becomes the message. But there is another dimension to this tactical reversal as well, one which has more explicit economic connotations that are related to the concerns we encountered over speculation and profit-generation in the play. Just as cursing functions as a bet on possible economic futures (sick cow, etc.), Macbeth functions as a bet on a possible political future. This ground-up knowledge of local systems, as I have attempted to stress, generates a mode of political action that is precisely environmental, then, as it relies on the *oikos* of mathematical probabilities available within any particular phenomenological matrix. This is not simply an abstraction, as what the sisters actually do is stack the probabilistic deck against Duncan by pushing Macbeth towards a truth that will be ushered along by their encounter with him. Killing Duncan is the solution to not just a moral and economic problem, but an ontological one: given his capacity to (almost) single-handedly maintain the sovereignty of the state within a culture that rewards violence, in a sense, Macbeth already is the king, an ace in the hole.

The ecological aspects of this recognition that takes place between the sisters and Macbeth is also part of a trope that the play establishes with regard to the relation between animals and sovereignty. In *The Beast and the Sovereign*, Derrida writes that the brute force of sovereign power is just that, an animal force that acts outside of the *nomos*: this notion in itself comes to form our notions of "man" as *politikon zoon*, i.e. "political man as superior to animality

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and political man as animality."[219] This animality is precisely the quality that the sisters

recognize in Macbeth, a violent energy that might secure Scotland via its capacity to make a

spectacle of itself. Weber's notion of *charisma* is helpful in framing this animality with regards

to its attractiveness, as it is constituted by "a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue

of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated and endowed with supernatural,

superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities."[220] Macbeth's alliance with

l'animal produces an excess, a quantity that becomes a quality, and, just as we saw with the

policing of surpluses and excesses in the previous section, the neighborhood is being monitored

for those who have a consumable excess attached to them. This consumability, following

Bataille, is contingent upon that excess being expended, freely given away to the body politic as

a sacrifice: much like the women on the gallows in chapter one, the sovereign is he who is

willing to risk everything.[221] Selfless, heroic action in Scotland has become institutionalized (and

yet, devalued) within a system of social capital that routinizes suicidal bursts of blind violence –

the becoming-*berzerk*[222] that constitutes the movement of sovereignty itself. In this sense, the

state institutionalizes the irrational: as Deleuze puts it in *Difference and Repetition*, "a tyrant

institutionalizes stupidity, but he is the first servant of his own system and the first to be installed

within it."[223] Here we might find common ground with more traditional, humanist criticisms of

Macbeth's loss of reason as we too come to understand how violence is related to the irrational,

but also how the irrational is always-already built into the very nature of Scottish sovereignty

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[219] *The Beast and the Sovereign*. Vol. 1. Trans. Geoffrey Bennington. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 26.
[220] *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*. Trans. A.M. Henderson and Talcott Parsons. (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1947), 358.
[221] Achille Mbembe, "Necropolitics" *Public Culture*. Vol. 15. No. 1.(Winter, 2003), 16. See *The Accursed Share: Consumption*. Vol. 1. (New York: Zone Books, 1991), 22.
[222] "For present purposes it will be necessary to treat a variety of different types as being endowed with charisma[.] It includes the state of a 'berserker' whose spells of maniac passion have, apparently wrongly, sometimes been attributed to the use of drugs." Ibid. 359.
[223] *Difference and Repetition*. Trans. Paul Patton. (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1994), 151.

itself as the hegemonization of total risk – the logic that breaks battle lines also kills a king and then forgets to plant the knives on the patsies (II.ii.56).

The blind violence that establishes a meta-humanity within the structure of the state is also related to the questions we have explored regarding agency as this notion of irrationality seems to both affirm and annul its possibility. If Macbeth acts valiantly in battle (i.e. irrationally – not with regards to his own self-preservation), he will, at least in theory, be rewarded; however, if he rationally attempts to fight defensively as to protect his own life, he will not – hence the value placed on "smacking" wounds (I.ii.44). Agency within the Scottish structure only comes at moments of self-disavowal and abandon, which, in turn, creates a paradoxical structure by which human subjectivity comes to be constituted as a cultural signifier through becomings-animal. Macbeth's *bêtise*, in this sense, is called into question when Lady Macbeth likens him to a snake (I.v.65) that both appears and strikes in the same moment (the ideal schema, we might say, of any revolutionary act). This movement implies an always-already-too-late-ness that is attendant to the stupidity of the sovereign act: all that remains in that causal vacuum is the fidelity we discussed above, the following through of the actualization so as to maximize its effect. Lady Macbeth also compares Macbeth to a cat (I.vii.44-5) that "would eat fish but will not wet her feet."[224] In other words, the cat is required to execute an action in the face of what would appear as a kind of "stupidity" to an observer (jumping into something it unequivocally doesn't like in order to reap the piscine reward). This notion of dumbfounded amazement in the face of sovereign stupidity could not be made more explicit as when the captain describes Macbeth and Banquo's turning into the tide of the Norwegian onslaught: "Except they meant to bathe in

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[224] See note 2 in *Macbeth*. Ed. Stephen Orgel. (New York: Penguin, 2000), 22.

reeking wounds,/Or memorize another Golgotha,/I cannot tell –" (I.ii.40-1).[225] This irrationality

is precisely what Lady Macbeth's comparisons point to, i.e. that he is already the sovereign

animal that emerges in these moments of "superhuman" agency.

I have attempted to elucidate Macbeth's becoming-animal here because it relates

specifically to how the sisters will come to employ him. Just as their other animal proxies,

Macbeth is becoming-*familiar* especially with regards to his growing reliance on their political

consultation, a phenomenon that makes him a literal 'go-between' connecting *their* desire and *his*

actions (a movement that will become all the more intense after Banquo's murder – see below).

This assemblage of desires and movements, this "becoming-animal" as Deleuze and Guattari

remind us, "is real, even if the animal the human being becomes is not"[226] as the

"familiarization" between Macbeth and the sisters is an *alliance* between heterogeneous terms[227]:

it is not an imitation, but the result of the tactic they use to couple their desire to his power. In

this sense, *prophecy* is the ultimate tool of alliance as it disseminates a reality that would not lead

not necessarily towards imitations, but fulfillments of a historical assemblage that the prophecy

reveals in its utter *immanence*.

The circulation of prophecy often corresponded directly to political and social crisis as

people "turned to them in search of security in an uncertain world."[228] The interpretation of

ancient prophecies often hinged on analogy, locating present-day correspondences to mythical

semiotic catalogue white dragons, the Boar of Cornwall, or the Ass of Wickedness.[229] In this

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[225] Compare to Coriolanus' harrying of the Volscians and his the soldiers reaction to his superhuman capacities: "Coriolanus: So, now the gates are ope: now prove good seconds;/'Tis for the followers fortune widens them,/Not for the fliers: mark me and do the like.//*enters the gates*//First Soldier: Foolhardiness! Not I.//Second Solider: Nor I.//*Marcius is shut in*//First Soldier: See, they have shut him in.//All: To the pot, I warrant him." (I.v.14-7). *The Norton Shakespeare*. Ed. Stephen Greenblatt et. al. (New York: W.W. Norton and Co.,1997), 2804.
[226] *A Thousand Plateaus*, 238.
[227] Ibid.
[228] Richard Cavendish, *A History of Magic*. (New York: Taplinger, 1977), 95.
[229] *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 462.

sense, prophecy was adaptable to "local variations and permutations"[230] that helped to establish

its authority with regard to its geographical application. Since, as Keith Thomas writes, "the

function of ancient prophecies was no different from that of astrological or magical

prognostication in general." [231] This locality becomes important as it relates to the agency of

those who believed them, and like the economic effects of astrology that I discussed above,

prophecies generated movements and effects within local populations: "they make a man go on

with boldness and courage."[232] As Thomas writes, prophecies "justified wars or rebellions and

they made periods of unprecedented change emotionally acceptable to those who lived them" by

aligning the present day with the *telos* of the ancient archive.[233] In *A Discursive Problem* (1588),

John Harvey writes that prophecies cropped up "to serve present turns, and to feed the working

humour of busy and tumultuous heads, continually affecting some innovation or other."[234]

Harvey's descriptions of prophecy are not always this positive, as he continually makes

reference to the "sturs, tumults, vproars, seditions, mutinies, garboiles, commotions,

insurrections, rebellions, pruate myseries, common mischiefes, publique calamities, and

desolations"[235] that prophecy has the capacity to generate. More specifically, there is a persistent

emphasis throughout the text on the power of prophecy to *terrorize*, or, to use Harvey's phrase,

"common fearfulness."[236] In this sense, political prophecy in England and Europe was often

associated with rebellion and revolt and became compounded by fears of Antichrist, invasion,

and loss of order – popular prophecies foretold that the end of Elizabeth, was, in fact, the end of

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[230] Ibid. 463.
[231] Ibid. 501.
[232] John Selden, *Table –Talk*. Quoted in Thomas, 501.
[233] *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 502-3.
[234] Quoted in ibid. 503.
[235] *A Discoursive Problem* (1588), 71.
[236] Ibid.

England: "When Hempe [Henry, Edward, Mary, Philip, Elizabeth] is spun/England's done."[237] Given the political capital that prophecy seemed to generate, it is not surprising, then, that it came to be used not as means of solidifying official power, but as a means of political resistance whereby the rebellious could use them both to justify and amplify their efforts to change the political reality of the present day. As Sharon Jansen writes, prophecy became "powerful anti-government propaganda," notably during the reign of Henry VIII[238] (his father had made them felonious in his first session of parliament[239]). Furthermore,

> those who chose the weapon of prophecy were those who had few other weapons to hand. They were ordinary men and women farthest from the sources of political decision and control. And those who found an element of power in the authority of prophecy used it in a kind of desperate attack *against* authority – the authority of King and parliament.[240]

Prophecy, in other words, unlike one-on-one consultation, had the capacity to generate macro-effects among groups of people who felt they had been wronged by the government. As Norman Cohn suggests, it was often yoked to the millenarian "*phantasy* or social myth around which a collective can be formed."[241] Consequently, in times of crises and revolt, "multitudes of people acted out with fierce energy a shared phantasy which, though delusional, yet brought them such intense emotional relief that they could live only through it, and were perfectly willing both to kill and to die for it."[242] Rendered as such, prophecy is extremely dangerous as it can take on a life of its own: as Hobbes puts it, prophecy is "many times the principal cause of the event

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[237] Quoted in *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 463.
[238] Sharon L. Jansen, *Political Protest and Prophecy Under Henry VIII*. (Rochester: Boydell Press, 1991), 20.
[239] *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 470-1.
[240] Ibid. 19.
[241] Simon Crichtley, *Faith of the Faithless: Experiments in Political Theology*. (London: Verso Books, 2012), 118.
[242] Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium: Revolutionary Millenarians and Mystical Anarchists of the Middle Ages*. (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1970), 88.

foretold."[243] In this sense, prophecy doesn't predict the future, but acts as a kind of imperative for those who must endure historical change, just as Macbeth may rely on the prophecy to validate the murderous actions that he seems to have already contemplated – however, it is impossible to state, proportionally, however, how much of his agency is derived from his thoughts, the prophecy, or his thoughts about the prophecy.

Prophecy also serves to expand the logic of cursing as we explored above by attempting to overlay one epistemology onto another, and thus eliciting some sort of activity in those it is intended to affect (put differently, prophecies labor to become *performative* pronouncements). In light of Jensen's formulation of the function of prophecy with regards to desperation, it becomes clear that the cursing and prophecy are linked as we keep in mind, as Keith Thomas notes, that "it was a moral necessity that the poor and the injured should be believed to have this power of retaliation when all else had failed."[244] In other words, both curses and prophecy have the capacity to terrorize in that they traffic in epistemological simulation. Prophecies function this way, in particular, when they predict the future and this is where they become even more similar to curses, especially if they are essentially misinformation, or false prophecy. Just as astrology made its way into the countryside, so did prophecy as "cunning fellows no doubt, and mightie politiques…wéene through sophistrie to attaine tyrannie: and attempt by *Comical* sturs, and priuate vndermines, to inforce *Tragicall* calamities, and publique ruines."[245] The dynamics of prophecy operate similarly to cursing because, on at a certain level, they are especially effective if they combine fact and fiction, as "the greater part of most political prophecy was really history disguised as prophecy: historical events were treated as if they had not yet occurred."[246] This

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[243] *The English Works of Thomas Hobbes of Malmesbury*. Vol. 6. (London: John Bohn, 1840), 399.
[244] *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 605.
[245] Harvey, *A Discoursive Problem* (1588), 74.
[246] *Political Protest and Prophecy Under Henry VIII*, 15.

notion, however, of disguising history within a fictional frame is extremely useful to our theses

concerning cursing as both tactics make use of an archive, a *topos*, an "encyclopedia of the

situation"[247] whereby the operator utilizes the semiotic environment to secure whoever hears

them to a set of knowledge that the intended person may not be aware exists (i.e. this knowledge

is not part of the "state of the situation" for the object of the curse or prophecy). By doing so, the

person who hears these speech acts then takes this knowledge and puts her rudder back into the

daily flux of lived experience and that's where the trouble starts. As reality has now become

indexed to the utterance, everything comes to signify significantly as it must now be fed through

the black box that the curse/prophecy inaugurates. Using the same logic as I did in chapter one,

prophecies that are especially effective, have, in one way or another, been strongly indexed to

conditions that may arise *after* the utterance and this is where prophecy comes to differ

structurally from cursing as prophecy is not reliant upon the initial *thanatos* that cursing is. Even

if a prophecy is deliberately false, it can come to operate without the receiver necessarily being

aware that they are being subjected to the signifier(s). In other words, they may simply attribute

it to some other cause, and thereby use the prophecy as a kind of epistemological scaffolding for

what might have done anyway. However, if the state of the situation had not yet been realized by

the intended object of the prophecy (*Bessie wasn't sick…*), then the prophecy, like the curse,

might seem to come out of nowhere – to borrow a phrase from Derrida, this kind of terror

"organizes the panic" of everyday life and stamps a signifier to it. But what is the nature of this

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[247] "From this point of view the situation is a form of presentation, the state of the situation a form of representation. And knowledge, being the way we organize the situation's elements linguistically, is always a certain relation between presentation and representation. Knowledge is most simply defined as the linguistic determination of the general system of connections between presentation and representation. *The set of a situation's various bodies of knowledge* I call 'the encyclopedia' of the situation." Lauren Sedofsky "Being by Numbers – Interview with Artist and Philosopher Alain Badiou," *Art Forum*, (Oct. 1994), http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0268/is_n2_v33/ai_16315394 [my italics]

signifier? Since it is a mash-up of fact and fiction and is not delivered by an aggressor, how is the signifier referenced? Under whose agency does it come to operate?

Here prophecy challenges the local limits that curses operate within. With a curse, even if it spreads throughout a neighborhood as the malign retribution of a social outcast, it is still localizable. Prophecy, on the other hand, makes use of local knowledge only to deploy it as an anonymous force that cannot necessarily be traced back to anything localizable: if one is operating under the signifier of a Merlin, Monmouth, or Mother Shipton, one isn't fulfilling the will of any single, or even real, person, but rather a historical meme that violently yokes the present to time out of mind. This is why prophecy is ready at hand as a political device: it becomes easily attached to concepts of sovereignty as it appears to operate *everywhere* and is seemingly immortal. Prophecy, we might then say, always operates on a different *scale* than cursing, even in cases where cursing (and its fallout) comes to dominate the politics of any particular neighborhood. This limit, then, is precisely the barrier that cursing runs up against when it attempts to make very large pronouncements (like Houin's pronouncement on the gallows) about the nature of reality. This notion of scale, though, is not simply spatial. Since the circulation of prophecy is rebellious action whereby the agent attempts to garner a critical mass that would spark a revolution, this circulation in itself is yet another risk, as once it becomes influential to be recognized by the sovereign, it is *de facto* treason. Just as we saw in chapter one with the destruction of hedgerows and markers, riot operates on the razor's edge of treason simply by its tendency to create an assemblage of political desire. Above, I argued that cursing was a topologically-sensitive process and the same is true for prophecy in that, just like the land curse, it retools the subjects' *relation* to the land, and since common law is the nomological

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apparatus that guarantees these relations, then prophecy acts to restore a *common* reality – the immemorial body of common *law* – that has somehow been lost.

Prophecy, then, we might say, picks up where cursing leaves off as its operating system is the eternal body politic itself, the *mythos* of history to which any early modern state must correspond.[248] For the subject positioned within this *kyklos*, prophecy demands that the subject, in a sense, bang a square present into a round past. Its execution is dependant upon the subject's assent to its truth, but it comes to constitute the subject's agency within history as, to use Badiou's rendering, the receiver of prophecy becomes the bearer of a truth: political action is a result of a fidelity to the event in which the subject is "locally born out…*woven* out of a truth."[249] Badiou's metaphor is particularly useful as the receiver of prophecy, is in a sense, woven into (and then out of) a *text* that only becomes localized (i.e. raised up out of the *mythos* of the immemorial) by one's fidelity to it. As one might imagine, this isn't always pretty and we saw an example of this with reference to cursing when William Byatt beat one of his cows to death: the receiver attempts to *speed up* what has already, apparently, been occurring (three of his animals had already died).[250] The consent to a prophetic statement becomes the act of catching up to the reality it posits. This temporal framework also demands that the subject closely scrutinize the current conditions as they relate to the prophecy, and this process is quantitative: it requires counting up the terms within the state of the situation that refer to the prophecy itself and then asking whether or not this quantity constitutes a workable reality into which the prophecy will be

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[248] "At a more advanced stage of historical development came the cyclical view of history, the view that change did occur, but that in the long run everything came back to where it started. This notion of history waxes and wanes like the moon, so influential in classical times, enjoyed a new vogue during the Renaissance, when it could be maintained that the highest aesthetic and ethical virtue lay in imitation, or rather emulation, of the standards of antiquity" Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 510.

[249] Alain Badiou, "On a Finally Objectless Subject," *Who Comes After the Subject?*. Ed. Eduardo Cadava et al. (New York: Routledge, 1991), 25.

[250] "Witches at St. Osyth." *Witchcraft in England, 1558-1618*. Ed. Barbara Rosen. (Amherst: Univ. of Massachusetts Press, 1969), 122.

inserted into the initial conditions that are the very ontology of the situation.[251] This notion of

temporality and appropriateness is integral to the notion of sovereignty I have attempted to

elucidate, specifically, with regard to the *bêtise* of the sovereign (*qua* revolutionary) who, in the

middle of a battle or a busy street, decides: *Here. Now*.

This prognosticatory programmatic is, then, precisely how the sisters' yoke his violence

to their political desires: they *familiarize* him by recognizing the correspondence between the

raw "stupidity" of his violence and their disdain over the lack of civil and economic regulation.

The "meeting" between the sisters and Macbeth functions to establish them as a surface onto

which Macbeth can reflect his own desires[252] – when he asks who they are, they do not answer

(I.iii.47-8). This vacuum, as I suggested above, immediately puts them in a position of relative

authority: answering in prophecy serves to establish a dromological relationship between them as

Macbeth, from 48 on, will become indebted to the occult knowledge that they dispense – not via

request, we should add, but through a violent, pre-emptive enunciation, that once spoken,

fundamentally alters the state of the situation by priming the Event that hovers just below the

surface. This notion of priming, a term I am borrowing from neuroscience[253], helps to explain

also why Macbeth reacts the way that he does to their three initial statements ("Glamis" =

history; "Cawdor" = a known-unknown; "King" = future/prognostication): as his conversations

with Lady Macbeth attest, this rumination over what to do with his desire has been present for

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[251] Of course, as we saw, this works in the same way for cursing as it must count the terms to see if there is a sufficient number of potential maladies available within the situation – otherwise the curse won't take and the victim may simply forget about it because nothing bad happened.

[252] A Lacanian might say that they occupy the position of the Other within the discourse of the *analyst*. As Zizek writes, "the analyst's discourse stands for the emergence of revolution-ary-emancipatory [sic] subjectivity that resolves the split of university and hysteria. In it, the revolutionary agent – *a* – addresses the subject from the position of knowledge that occupies the place of truth…and the goal is to isolate, get rid of, the master signifier that structured the subject's (idologico-political) unconscious. "Jacques Lacan's Four Discourses" <www.lacan.com/zizfour.htm>

[253] "Priming is the nonconscious form of memory that involves a change in a person's ability to identify, produce or classify an item as a result of a previous encounter with that item or a related item." "Specificity of Priming: A Cognitive Neuroscience Perspective," *Nature Reviews Neuroscience*. No. 5 (Nov. 1, 2004), 853.

some time, and it may be for this reason why he stands, "rapt" (I.iii.57) at their pre-emptive identification of that desire. In other words, the sisters are using a set of terms that may have already been primed for, particularly as the titles that they name (leading up to "king") correspond to ontologies of violence, gifts from the sovereign that were purchased with blood: naming the king, in this context, means to name his executor (just as foretelling the date of his death, for an astrologer, amounts to treason). Since the pre-emptive statements come as a hierarchized series, they correspond to a progression of (self-)knowledge that will, for Macbeth, become all-consuming as no one can create a "be all end all" within the state of any situation. In this sense, Macbeth's desire corresponds to the prognostications that sailors and merchants received at the hands of cunning persons and astrologers: the occult services industry becomes metaphysically chiropractic ("hand"–"action") as the client becomes more and more consumed by variables within the state of the situation and desires more detailed information regarding the risk he has undertaken: as the play speeds along (at least up to the murder of Banquo), so also does the speed at which Macbeth is attempting to tie up all the loose ends of the prognostication, a process which only intensifies after his second meeting with the sisters.

What I am attempting to stress here is both the professional nature of the sisters' relationship with Macbeth and how this tacit professionalism entails at the very least, a certain level of control garnered through his well-established *belief* in what they tell him – a belief that persists up the final seconds of his reign. Just as it did in the village-level examples we examined at the opening of this chapter, the epistemological blind spot is proportional to the speed of early modern maritime communications.[254] Men who consulted with occult professionals discussed worries they had over various aspects of the voyage (crew, boat, exchange rates, pirates, fear of

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[254] Lyndal Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil: Witchcraft, Sexuality, and Religion in Early Modern Europe.* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 129.

drowning[255]) that would have given a cunning person a detailed portrait of economic practices

that they themselves –practices, we might add, very conceivably, they might not have morally

approved of, as we saw in Mun, for instance, in the public outcry over the provisioning of risky

overseas voyages (a point that is exacerbated, on a local level, by the rapid erosion of the

charitas during the Tudor-Stuart period, a public service that many widows, latter accused of

witchcraft, relied upon[256]). Here we see an instance of a collision between a confessional

technology[257] and a profession that markets in agency, a sort of Foucaldean paradox by claiming

that the relationship between cunning persons and other professionals amounted to a *market-level*

confessional technology, or mode of *containment*.[258] This notion of the confession helps to

explain the client's epistemological reliance on *prognosis*, but does not, however, account for the

sisters' moral agency – an agency that is present in the actions surrounding the episode with the

captain as they appear to be exacting justice on merchants who were generating massive profits

during, as stated, a deterioration in the infrastructures of social charity ("Aroint thee, witch!" –

I.iii.6). Nevertheless, since the occult professional was participating in this market, their

consultations carried along a narrative thread such that they might inadvertently develop

feedback loops that could have originated in a moral concern, as above, or simply as accidents

that were inherent to a practice reliant on the non-inductive, analogical models of thought that

accompanied astrology and the occult in general: as Keith Thomas puts it, "even without any

conscious deceit they might pick up a good deal of local knowledge, and adapt their

recommendations accordingly."[259] The logical end of this unconscious process of adaptation, as I

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[255] *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 366-7.
[256] Ibid. 671-2.
[257] "All those procedures by which the subject is incited to produce a discourse of truth about his sexuality which is capable of having effects on the subject himself." Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: Vol. 3: The Care of the Self*. Trans. Robert Hurley. (New York: Random House, 1988), 215-6.
[258] See also Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations*. (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1988), 21-65.
[259] *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 290.

am suggesting, might have resulted, if we take the macro view we did earlier with regard to the sheer number of consultations that were made, in the inadvertent manipulation of local markets. In other words, the occult economy may have at varying times and to varying degrees had an effect on the market economy, but that it is also possible that these professionals did become conscious of these feedback loops and then attempt to manipulate them to some sort of "ends" (III.v.13).[260] Given their capacity to generate a modicum of control via the epistemological gap in commercial communication, the sisters in *Macbeth* maintain a distance between their base of operation and the theatre wherein their machinations are played out. It is a control by proxy, a control that does not assert itself physically, but remains at a distance.

Although hypnosis does not become codified into a system of medical knowledge until the 19th century, historians of medicine and psychology trace the capacity for one mind to control or influence another in the thought of the 11th century philosopher Ibn Sina (Latinized as "Avicenna") who describes a pre-Cartesian concept of dualism that allows for a disembodied soul, "the 'operant' *wahm*…that is associated with thaumaturgy and the power of souls to act directly upon other souls or bodies, where its actions are a form of supernatural causation."[261] I would like to suggest there is the implication of such an element of hypnosis attendant to Macbeth's consultations with the sisters as "there is an element of hypnotic self-suggestion in

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[260] The possibility of a profitable manipulation of these kinds of feedback loops is made explicit when we consider the astrologer's relationship to maritime insurance: "A skeptic observed that if astrologers really knew so much about the fate of ships at sea, they could have made their fortunes by dabbling in maritime insurance and advising the insurers how to collect easy profits. In fact astrologers *were* frequently consulted on insurance problems during these early days of maritime insurance…John Gadbury, in his elaborate, guide to astrological lore for seamen, gave several examples in which he claimed to have saved shipowners thousands of pounds in insurance premiums." Ibid. 368.
[261] Robert E. Hall, "Intellect, Soul and Body in Ibn Sina: Systematic Synthesis and Development of the Aristotelian, Neoplatonic, and Galenic Theories," *Interpreting Avicenna: Science and Philosophy in Medieval Islam: Proceedings from the Second Conference of the Avicenna Study Group.* Ed. Jon McGinnis (Mainz: Avicenna Study Group, 2002), 68.

crystal-gazing and similar subjective activities."[262] As the text indicates, Macbeth stands "rapt"

(I.iii.57), first after the sisters actually pronounce his titles and future kingship, and then,

moments later, after Ross informs him of his new title (143). Macbeth's reaction to these stimuli

is thus described in terms that render him insensate to his surroundings. In this sense, the

prophetic statements provide an analogue to the dagger he will see later before the murder of

Duncan in that both his raptness and the dagger signal an absolutely internal experience of self-

awareness with regards to the capacities of his *agency*: his first becoming-animal in the presence

of the sisters is a profound muteness, a lack of verbal reasoning. Strangely, this creates a sort of

paradox in which his agency is contained within a pronounced fate that comes out of nowhere,

but is indexed, (or, primed) to an image that predated the encounter on the heath: the "golden

round/Which fate and metaphysical aid doth seem/To have crowned [him] withal" (I.v.27-9). As

I stressed above, reality in *Macbeth* is constructed around a virtual that has yet to be actualized,

but which seems to populate the landscape of the mind and the surface of Scotland itself. The

connection between Macbeth and the sisters, as I stressed above, is an *alliance*, a force of

becoming that is not an imitation of kingship, but the realization of an ontological truth that

emerges out of the structure by which social capital is generated. In becoming-familiar, Macbeth

enters into a feedback loop whereby he, however unwittingly, comes to fulfill the alliance on

both sides: his *animality* provides the sisters with a means of installing a securitizing terror in its

designated position at the top of Scottish hierarchy and simultaneously validates the impulsive

bêtise inherent to such a repulsively anti-early modern idea such as assassination and its

terrifying associations with Antichrist and anarchy.

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[262] *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 288.

Running the Simulation

This is the very aim of strategic information: to morally and physically deny the adversary the chance to rework his

hypotheses, by redefining the space he must cross or the time he has to live.

- Paul Virilio, *Popular Defense and Ecological Struggles*[263]

If, as I have suggested, that the political project that the sisters are engaging in is directed

at some form of regime change, then what does it look like when we take the initial conditions

that I have attempted to elucidate in this chapter, and run them like a simulation? It is not

necessary to speculate as to what might happen, as the play rushes to establish these conditions

in a little over an act. The remainder of the play, as we will see in this concluding inquiry, will

serve as a real-time conceptual model of the feedback loop that they are participating in. As we

shall see, this loop runs smoothly through the death of Duncan, but is severed after the murder of

Banquo as the sisters' (and Hecate) realize that the political experiment has devolved into a reign

of absolute terror, a maneuvering, that apparently does not correspond with what their original

"ends" were. We will begin by reading the semiotics of debt that surround Duncan's murder and

then proceed to an examination of what transpires after the change in tactics that occurs after

Hecate's appearance in III.v as the group uses a combination of terror and false security to,

respectively, legitimize his violent overthrow and create a hermetically-sealed theatre for his

demise via their use of prophecy as an epistemological weapon.

One final reference is made to Macbeth's becoming-animal before he kills Duncan, as he

describes what Derrida calls the *pas de loup*, i.e. "walk[ing] without making a noise, to arrive

without warning, to proceed discreetly, silently, invisibly, almost inaudibly and imperceptibly, as

[263] *Popular Defense and Ecological Struggles*. Trans. Mark Polizzotti. (New Yorke: Semiotext(e), 1990.

though to surprise a prey, to take it by surprising what is in sight but does not see coming the one that is already seeing it, already getting ready to take it by surprise."[264] This conceptualization of his treachery is supported both by the reference to murder's "sentinel, the wolf" (II.i.55) and the silence of the ghost (57), images of silence that are compounded by his concern over the earth's relation to his actions (57-61). This element of surprise, as we noted above, is key to generating the mimetic of terror among a population that, like the Azande, cannot tolerate the notion of an unaccounted-for accident[265]: the incapacity to index epistemological data as arbitrary, in turn, serves to fuel the "making-known" that terror itself relies on as its primary vehicle. After considering the "spirits" (I.v.25) that Lady Macbeth pours into his ear, Macbeth has made himself ready to become the brute required for the act he is about to perform – after considering the schema we have established with regards to his status as familiar and the conceptual priming that facilitated it, we, as a modern audience, might interpret the bell in the final lines of II.i as an almost Pavlovian device.

As we do not actually witness Duncan's murder, but only the aftermath of it, I think it may be useful to examine Macbeth's description of Duncan's death throes as a corresponding element to what we described earlier in terms of the king-maker's loss of social capital within the patron-client relationship they share. This raises a fundamental question concerning what it is that Duncan is doing with the social capital he is entrusted to dispense. As we saw in the case of his becoming-exception in naming his son the Prince of Cumberland, we might say that Duncan

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[264] *The Beast and the Sovereign*, 2.
[265] "As Calvin pointed out, the perils of daily existence would have made life intolerable for men who believed that everything happened by chance and that they were subject to every caprice of arbitrary fortune." Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of* Magic, 94. See also Michael Witmore, *The Culture of Accidents: Unexpected Knowledges in Early Modern England*. (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 2001); E. E. Evans-Pritchard, "The Notion of Witchcraft Explains Unfortunate Events," *Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic among the Azande*. (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1976), 18-32; James Howard Smith, *Bewitching Development: Witchcraft and the Reinvention of Development in Neoliberal Kenya*, (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2008), 15-23.

squanders Scotland's non-primogenitive capital on what essentially amounts to an annulment, an expenditure that cannot be recovered. This reading coheres with the model we have established concerning Duncan's misrecognition of values – he spends more social capital by, in a sense, purchasing his own replication (put differently, he pays for things that do not have any official cultural value – the breaking of tanistry laws). This reading itself engenders a secondary reading that is established specifically in the context of Macbeth's description of Duncan's body and blood. Read from a spatial, yet strangely economic point of view, Duncan's blood is formed of a metal that is superior to the metal that composes his silver skin (II.iii.110), much in the way that coinage in early modern England was an alloying of gold with a more inferior metal. Alternately, we might relate this image of coinage to the loss of patronage, which, in a sense, relates to the notion of hoarding, a dangerous practice with regards to kingship, especially in earlier societies where the dispensation of spoils held the economy together. If we read the silver and gold in the way, it is as if Duncan's body disguised the actual amount of wealth that was available as potential rewards for social capital, a concept that is compounded by Duncan's incessant stress on the inflationary debt that he cannot possibly repay in I.iv. I argue that this is further compounded by the way he Macbeth describes the wounds themselves: "a breach in nature/For ruin's wasteful entrance" (111-2). It is interesting that Macbeth brings up nature as he is explaining to Macduff why he summarily executed the two chamberlains, an act which mirrored the heroic stupidity of state violence that he has come to represent, but also the stupidity he has just engaged himself in by assassinating Duncan. Scotland's social capital of violence is precisely the "nature" (111) that rushes to exact immediate justice on violators – concordantly, he is already beginning to perform the *bêtise* of sovereign terror. In keeping with our reading of Duncan's hoarding practices, however, the blood Macbeth is describing refers, ironically, to the

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unnatural process of hoarding that Duncan has come to literally embody. Instead of the wounds

being an entry point for "ruin," in Macbeth's analogy, given the nature of the symbolic

imbalance that is established via the imagery surrounding Duncan's metallic body, he seems to

locate, instead, where "waste" has come to reside. In this sense, when Macbeth stabs Duncan, it

is as if he is pulling the handle of a slot machine that finally pays out the social capital that

Duncan had been hoarding.

Macbeth's reign after the death of Duncan, but before the murder of Banquo seems

unusually short: as Alan Sinfield notes, the Jamesean reading of the play "is careful to suggest

that he is hardly in office before he is overthrown."[266] I would like to add to this argument, in a

way, by linking this interval to a specific event that brings about Macbeth's eventual downfall –

a reading of the murder of Banquo that will serve to explain Hecate's entrance in III.v. As I

suggested above, there is an explicit rendering in the source materials of the gemini natures of

Macbeth and Duncan, that, ideally, would be "tempered" into a rule that was both charitable and

ruthless with regards to infighting and insurrectionary plots. Furthermore, there is sufficient

evidence in the play to establish Banquo as at least a foil to Macbeth's decision to kill Duncan.[267]

However, I argue that Banquo's concern over husbandry also sets him up as a contrast to

Macbeth, as he is content to "keep/[His] bosom franchised and allegiance clear" (II.i.29), a

comment that speaks to a notion of sustainability in the face of Macbeth's extremely risky

proposal: in other words, the coupling of Macbeth's raw power with Banquo's calculated

temperance serves to establish yet another concern over risk and loss. If Banquo serves as

Macbeth's tempering agent – just as Macbeth was to serve as a temper for Duncan – then does

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[266] Alan Sinfield, "*Macbeth*: History, Ideology and Intellectuals," *Materialist Shakespeare: A History*. Ed. Ivo Kamps. (London: Verso Books, 1995), 98.
[267] See, for instance, Harold Bloom, *Bloom's Shakespeare Through the Ages: Macbeth*. (New York: Infobase, 2008), 352. Bloom makes an a point to also note Banquo's silence after the murder, which, in his reading, is coupled with the absolute sovereign's right to not explain his actions.

this have any bearing on why the sisters, under Hecate, seek to undo their political experiment shortly after his death? Hecate, a character from Middleton's *The Witch* – which appeared a few years after *Macbeth* – was inserted into the play sometime after later in *Macbeth*'s textual history. As such, critics generally agree that she was not a part of the original design of the play[268] and many traditional readings of the play dismissed her character entirely as simply a textual aberration within the Folio. In contradistinction to these readings, I would like illustrate how there is method to the madness of whoever grafted Middleton on to Shakespeare. It is important to understand Hecate's role in the play because her interactions with the sisters fundamentally alters the latter's relation to Macbeth. I am arguing that the reason she does this inextricably linked to the location whereby what has become "III.v" is inserted into the Folio.

Hecate appears out of nowhere in at the beginning of the scene to chastise her comrades for their choice of tactics and their circumvention of what appears to be an occult hierarchy, which, given our reading, would extend from Macbeth the familiar all the way up to the spirits that seem animate the group's activities (also, for what may be strictly dramatic special effect, we see that Hecate seems to value image-magic and divination above prophecy and prognostication). But the textual insertion of Hecate, as I stated, comes to represent a hinge in the action of the play as, in keeping with Holinshed, "after the contriued slaughter of Banquho, nothing prospered with the foresaid Makbeth."[269] I am suggesting, then, that there is a causal connection between Hecate's appearance and Banquo's death which occurs, offstage, during the previous scene. The splicing seems to be deliberately placed in adjacency with the scene before it as Hecate's work with the sisters will be punctuated by a brief scene in which we learn of how much Scotland has devolved since Banquo's death as Macbeth seems to have suspended the

[268] *Macbeth: The Tragedie of Macbeth*. Ed. Nick De Somogyi. (London: Nick Hern Books, 2003), 194.
[269] *Holinshed's Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland*. Vol. 5. (London: J. Johnson, 1808), 273.

means by which underlings would "do faithful homage and receive free honors" (III.vi.36). It appears that honor, for Macbeth, has become a zero-sum game, much as the economy that Scotland seemed to have been participating in. In other words, ironically, Scotland has once again been transformed into a country that lacks security under the power that the sisters' hoped to designate as a means by which to secure civility and commerce. It has now fallen into an entropic slide towards hunger and terror as evidenced in the Lord's references to the lack of "meat" and "sleep" (34): when Macbeth appears in IV.i, this entropy will have become such an utterly random chaos that nature itself seems to have come undone.

Hecate's solution to the problem that the sisters' familiar has become will reflect their original desire for safety and regulation (Duncan's extremely invisible hand[270]) while simultaneously utilizing another medium that had been used to control the occult in England since trials began in the mid-sixteenth century. As to the first point, the loss of Banquo as a tempering agent means that the sisters' experiment is done for: "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" (III.v.10-13). As I have stressed throughout this reading, this notion of "ends" is important as is serves to establish some sense of intentionality with regards to their actions (an intentionality which I have labored to extrapolate with regards to the "news" in Scotland). In this sense, Hecate's criticism of Macbeth's overkill is a product of her concern over the validity of the sisters' project, but it also serves as an assessment of what may have been the naïve pretensions concerning human nature and whether one can actually successfully install a Macbeth in a position of absolute sovereignty. However, Hecate's response/plan utilizes an

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[270] Writing on Adam Smith, Chomsky writes, "The [invisible hand] destroys community, the environment, and human values generally – and even the masters [of mankind] themselves, which is why the business classes have regularly called for state intervention to protect them from market forces[.]" "Notes of NAFTA: 'The Masters of Man.' *The Nation* (March, 1993) <www.chomsky.info/articles/199303--.htm

analogical parallel that Macbeth's paranoia establishes between the curse of sleeplessness

(II.ii.38-43; 45-47) and the dearth that it engenders thorough the loss of "great nature's second

course" (42). In this sense, a lack of food and sleep correspond, causally to a corresponding lack

of vigilance that led to civil and economic unrest. "Sleep no more" (38), then, serves as an

analogue both to awareness and consumption, a dyad that is solidified when we remember that

women who were accused of witchcraft were often intentionally deprived of sleep and food,

made to stand on a stool in the middle of a room so that the interrogators might see her, in

desperation, call out to her familiar.[271] In this sense, the latter two acts of the play chart a course

whereby this lack of security for occult professionals is grafted onto state power. As Hecate

seems to recognize, a false sense of security is an effective weapon that can be used to undo an

absolutist position: in a sense – as if to channel Hobbes against his will – Hecate seems to

understand that absolutism is an easier mechanism to destroy simply because of its centralization

(what Deleuze and Guattari, writing on fascism, describe as a "rigid segmentarity"[272]). In the

absolutist model, any micro-level element of the state is attached symbiotically to the apex. What

Hecate and the sisters must attempt to do is subtract Macbeth-ness, as much as they can, out of

the political equation by reducing his *bêtise* to an absolutely irrational base whereby his capacity

to understand the probabilistic nature of reality (*prognosis*) is utterly demolished by their false

prophecies.

Their warnings to Macbeth in IV.i deliberately set up an epistemological system

whereby he will come to "spurn fate, scorn death, and bear/His hopes 'bove wisdom, grace, and

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[271] "Having taken the suspected Witch, shee is placed in the middle of a room upon a stool or table, crosse-legg'd, or in some other uneasie posture, to which if she submits not she is then bound with cords; there is she watcht and kept without meat or sleep for a space of 24 hours…A little hole is likewise made in the door for the Impe to come in at[.]" Matthew Hopkins, quoted in Montague Summers, *The Geography of Witchcraft*. (Evanston: University Books, 1958), 140.
[272] See *A Thousand Plateaus*, 208-231.

fear" (III.v.30-1). It is within this context, consequently, that Macbeth's *bêtise* will become denatured into utter *cruelty*, a function of thought itself that pushes stupidity towards its limit, towards an animality that foregoes any sense of foresight and thus becomes, at a certain level, non-animal, as perception, even in animals, allows for varying degrees of problem-solving. Furthermore, the value judgments applied to animals becomes null in the light of unreason, as animals do not have the capacity to recede into baseness. As Deleuze puts it, "from the point of view of the philosophy of nature, madness arises at the point at which the individual contemplates itself in this free ground – and, as a result, stupidity in stupidity and cruelty in cruelty – to the point that it can no longer stand itself."[273] This "free ground" will be precisely the empty field that will be laid out before Macbeth, a *horror vacuui* that will be filled with violence and cruelty. In an ironic way, then, Macbeth's telic fantasy, the "be-all and end-all" (I.vii.5), will become-true as he is installed within a logical frame that reduces his thought, animal and all, to degree zero.

The re-tooling of Macbeth's epistemology accomplishes, to use May's term, a second "siege" of terror as it allows for enough time for the scrambled elements of the Scottish state to regroup and assault the state along with foreign powers. In other words, the sisters used an assassination to create a siege of terror that, in turn, evolved into a reign of terror that must be undone by an additional siege. The security that Hecate and the sister establish ultimately leads to a barricade of Dunsinae as Macbeth attempts to reduce himself to a sort absolutist brain in a vat, complete with mercenaries who have no connection to his body politic. Since Hecate's critique of security was more than likely added in later well after 1606 and since it was almost certainly, then, not performed in the king's presence, the addendum might function as a more implicit critique of the solipsism of absolutism as it relies on a divine guarantee of its validity:

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[273] *Difference and Repetition*. Trans. Paul Patton. (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1994), 452.

providence is simply what the king does. Hecate's fear of Macbeth's overkill may then align her

with the rule that Malcolm sets up at the very end of the play, a sense of sovereignty that

acknowledges its alliance with the animal (as we see in Malcolm's testing of Macduff), but that,

at the same time, attempts to temper it with a rational mode of foresight, which, I am arguing, is

precisely what Malcolm claims to be doing in the last line of the play when he promises to

restore *proportion* – "measure, time, and place" (V.viii.73) to the state. Is this sense, Hecate and

the sisters may have managed, by the end of the play, to enact some sort of mode of order within

the Scottish state. As I noted above, historically, Malcolm will be the ruler who will import a

mode of economic organization, that, for many in early modern England, served as a lost ideal:

the feudal manor, complete with an intact *common law*.

Conclusion

To conclude this inquiry, I would like to briefly meditate on one of the final images we see of Macbeth, as he is described as a bear that has been baited (V.vii.1-2) and threatened with "the rabble's curse" (V.viii.8). This image of the animal, however, is not one that is associated with the "free ground" that the sovereign discovers within the matrix of absolutism, but is rather an image of *bêtise* that is stripped of that freedom and has been tied down and secured, as we see with Malcolm, to the body politic ("rabble"). Macbeth, like Coriolanus, cannot endure the idea that his body would be put up as a sideshow parallel to the power that he is being forced to relinquish in the face of public fears. The images at the end of the play serve as a corollary to original political risk that the sisters take via their interactions with him as a client as, by the end of the play, he has become baited to the fate that any client seeking occult consultations might, given the level of anxiety they experienced with regard to their commercial actions-at-a-distance. In Scotland, security follows a law of diminishing returns, as terror comes to fill in the gaps between the economy that has been decimated by civil war and mismanagement and the solution that attempts to securely operate at a distance. In this sense, the play reinforces the concern that this thesis has established with regards to local conditions and the knowledge that emerges through the feedback loops of action and structure. An occult economy, for early moderns, was dependant upon a sympathy between vastly heterogenous systems and varying scales. Accordingly, a workable *political ecology* depends upon the dual shared root of ecology *and*

economy, as *oikos* is a state of affairs, a *logos*, that tries desperately to establish an ethic (*nomos*) within a closed system. *As above, so below.*

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