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The play returns to Duncan's palace, where Malcolm tells his father that Cawdor was executed after confessing to and repenting of his sins. As Duncan laments about how he placed 'absolute trust' in Cawdor Macbeth and Banquo then enter and are thanked by the king for their feats in the battlefield, to which they respond with a declaration of loyalty to the king. However when Duncan then reveals that he will name Malcolm as heir to the throne Macbeth secretly views Malcolm as an obstacle to his desire, despite displaying an appearance of happiness. Plans are made for a feast at Macbeth's castle that night for the king and Macbeth goes ahead to inform his wife of this. Analysis The mention of the thane of Cawdor is significant for several reasons. Firstly, it raises questions over the suitability of Duncan's rule; if he had been on the battlefield with the army this would surely have prevented the thane having the ability to act in such a traitorous manner. The link between the thane of Cawdor and the sudden appearance of Macbeth is designed to form a comparison of the two; Macbeth is taking over from Cawdor as the threat to the king. His actions here continue his role as tragic hero; initially he held a position of virtue but now, as a result of his tragic flaw (his ambition), he begins to lose his virtuous character as he plots against the king, seen as he deceptively declares his loyalty to the king while secretly viewing the king's heir as an obstacle to his desire. Points of note In the space of four scenes we have seen how widely deception is accepted in the play. Firstly we have seen the Thane of Cawdor, who attempted to deceive Duncan, king of Scotland. Secondly Macbeth and Banquo, both of whom were praised for the brave and virtuous nature, speak of it. Now even the king of Scotland accepts that it is present in his kingdom, remarking of how he was deceived: 'There's no art/ To find the mind's construction in the face./ He was a gentleman on whom I built/ An absolute trust'. Macbeth also forebodes his deception of Duncan, remarking 'our duties/ Are to your throne and state, children and servants,/ which do but what they should by doing everything/ safe toward your love and honor'; he will soon do the complete opposite when he invites him to his castle. The theme of corruption comes to light here as Duncan remarks to Macbeth that he has 'begun to plant thee and will labor/ to make thee full of growing', which alludes to the king's control of all subjects in his kingdom. Macbeth's killing of Duncan will corrupt the natural order of things, by severing himself from the very 'root' that feeds him. The idea of cutting yourself off from your source goes against the norm, and this is what will occur when Macbeth kills Duncan; the natural order will be upset and the world corrupted. The scene begins with King Duncan declaring "Is execution done on Cawdor?" (i.iv line 1), it foreshadows the death and downfall of Macbeth because the title 'Thane of Cawdor' will be bestowed upon Macbeth. Moreover Macbeth is the one who administers the "bloody execution" (i.ii line 18) suggesting that he is a 'tragic hero' and brings his own damnation upon himself. What is also apparent is the parallels that are drawn between the 'Thane of Cawdor' and Macbeth later in the play. Duncan places "an absolute trust" (i.iv line 15) in the Thane a prolepsis for Duncan will come to the castle of the Macbeth's in "double trust" (i.vii line 12) implying how Macbeth will become a traitor. Scene 4 also reveals that Malcolm (King Duncan's son) is named "The Prince of Cumberland" (i.iv line 40) therefore going against the prophesy that Macbeth will be the King of Scotland, therefore giving Macbeth a motive to kill Duncan in order to take the title. Again dealing with the idea of regicide in Jacobean Britain, therefore Macbeth could be viewed as a cautionary tale to those who are planning to kill the King. Moreover the play was written a year after the gunpowder plot so the themes within the play are contextually relevant to the reception at the time of writing. The declaration also reveals that King Duncan may view his son Malcolm to possess more 'kingly' qualities as he equally could have chosen Macbeth, showing that Macbeth is not worth of becoming king. Another important quote that is revealed in Scene 4 is "stars hide your fires, let not light see my black and deep desires" (i.iv line 51-52). Revealed in the quote is the conflict between light and dark, a gothic element, also suggesting that there is a conflict within man between evil and goodness within. Moreover Macbeth is suggested to be not a noble character, for Duncan attributes "stars" (i.iv line 42) with nobleness but Macbeth is hiding the noble elements of his character. Displaying to the audience the degeneration of Macbeth into evil, thus the fatal flaw of Macbeth is his ambition as it leads to his final destruction. The imagery personifies the "deep desires" advocating that the evil inside Macbeth is not his own but the works of 'evil spirits' and could be implied that the Witches have heavily influenced Macbeth through the rhyme pattern as Shakespeare reserves rhyme for evil characters. In order to continue enjoying our site, we ask that you confirm your identity as a human. Thank you very much for your cooperation.

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