~~Weary sennights nine times nine,~~
~~Shall he dwindle, peak, and pine.~~
~~Though his bark cannot be lost,~~
~~Yet it shall be tempest-tossed.~~
~~Look what I have.~~

SIDE 2

~~SECOND WITCH Show me, show me.~~
~~FIRST WITCH Here I have a pilot's thumb,~~
~~Wrecked as homeward he did come.~~

~~*Drum within*~~

THIRD WITCH A drum, a drum;
Macbeth doth come.

~~ALL The weïrd sisters, hand in hand,~~
~~Posters of the sea and land,~~
~~Thus do go, about, about,~~
~~Thrice to thine, and thrice to mine,~~
~~And thrice again, to make up nine.~~
~~Peace, the charm's wound up.~~

Enter MACBETH *and* BANQUO

MACBETH So foul and fair a day I have not seen.
BANQUO How far is't called to Forres? What are these,

21 sennights] F (Seu'nights) 27 Wrecked] F (Wrackt) 27 SD] F (*at right margin opposite* come) 30 weïrd] *Theobald;* weyward F. *See Commentary* 37 Forres] *Staunton* (*after Pope*); Soris F

21 sennights weeks. F's 'Seu'nights' (seven nights) shows the etymology.

22 peak, and pine waste away and languish (virtual synonyms with 'dwindle').

23 bark small ship.

27 SD *Drum within* Editors and producers have worried whether the drum indicates an accompanying army; on the contrary, it is a conventional Jacobean way to introduce an important martial character, though Davenant and others added text and business to indicate an off-stage army, or to accommodate a silent one on-stage.

30 weïrd 'claiming the supernatural power of dealing with fate or destiny' (*OED* Weird *a* 1); see also *OED* Weird *sb*, and Supplementary Note, pp. 239–40 below. Theobald's emendation, adopted here, indicates the word's pronunciation as a disyllable.

31 Posters Speedy travellers (*Lexicon*); a Shakespearean coinage (Garner), presumably because 'the fastest way of travel . . . was by post horse' (Foakes).

33 to thine . . . to mine in your direction . . . in my direction (?). The witches here perform some dance, formal movements, or gestures that bind each individual into the group. Jonson's witches danced 'back to back and hip to hip, their hands joined, and making their circles backward, to the left hand, with strange fantastic motions of their heads and bodies' (*Queens* 330–2; see also Jonson's note, *ibid.*, pp. 541–2, and more generally, Clark, 'Inversion', pp. 122–5).

34 nine An action is repeated three times for each witch.

35 wound up placed in readiness (*OED* Wind v^1 24f, quoting this line). The figurative use probably derives from tightening the strings on a musical instrument, but the witches may have 'wound' themselves 'up' in some stage movement (see 33 n.). The phrase could also mean 'concluded'.

36–107 So . . . robes Hints of how this scene might have been staged and acted appear in Macbeth's letter to his wife (1.5.1 ff.).

36 foul and fair meteorologically unpleasant and militarily successful. Macbeth's words echo the witches' (1.1.12); see p. 51 above.

37 How . . . Forres? How distant is Forres reckoned to be? A Scotticism (Travers).

37 Forres Town east of Inverness and not far from the site of one of the historical battles earlier

So withered and so wild in their attire,
That look not like th'inhabitants o'th'earth,
And yet are on't? – Live you, or are you aught
That man may question? You seem to understand me,
By each at once her choppy finger laying
Upon her skinny lips; you should be women,
And yet your beards forbid me to interpret
That you are so.

MACBETH Speak if you can: what are you?

FIRST WITCH All hail Macbeth, hail to thee, Thane of Glamis.

SECOND WITCH All hail Macbeth, hail to thee, Thane of Cawdor.

THIRD WITCH All hail Macbeth, that shalt be king hereafter.

BANQUO Good sir, why do you start and seem to fear
Things that do sound so fair? – I'th'name of truth

(1.2) condensed. Holinshed's account of King Duff's illness describes 'a sort [group] of witches dwelling in . . . Fores' (*Scotland*, p. 149b). See the map, p. 94 above. F's 'Soris' (for 'Foris', i.e. Fores) derives from a misreading of manuscript *f* as ſ. See 69n.

37–40 What . . . on't Banquo notices the witches; like the king's company in 1.2, he judges appearances, though not so confidently. His speech (38–45) is also the only spoken evidence for the witches' appearance, which may be (and has been in some productions) quite different. Holinshed's 1577 illustration of this scene represents the witches as mortal women, not old, fashionably, even aristocratically, dressed (see Bullough, VII, 494), thus giving the paradox of 'fair is foul' (1.1.12) point. See Supplementary Note to 1.1.0 SD (p. 239 below) and 'I neuer thought so fayre a dame, had been so foule within' (*Fidele and Fortunio* line 703).

42–3 By each . . . lips The witches silence Banquo with eerily synchronised gestures.

42 choppy chapped, cracked by wind and weather. This line is the earliest recorded use under *OED* Choppy; *OED* Chappy a^1 shows that spelling as also current.

43 should be look as if you ought to be.

43–4 women . . . beards See illustration 7 and p. 35 above. Compare the insult to Paulina, 'mankind witch' (*WT* 2.3.68).

46–8 Political prophecy, especially on the eve of conflict, has a long history and was dangerous in the Tudor and Stuart period. Shakespeare dramatised such prophecies in *2H6* 1.4 and *John* 4.2.143–57 and 5.1.25–9; Meander thought the rebel Tamburlaine 'misled by dreaming prophecies' (*Tamburlaine, Part 1* 1.1.41). See e.g. Steven Mullaney, *The Place of the Stage*, 1988, chapter 5; Jaech; Mary C. Williams, 'Merlin and the prince: *The Speeches at Prince Henry's Barriers*', *RenD* n.s. 8 (1977), 221–30; Howard Dobin, *Merlin's Disciples: Prophecy, Poetry and Power in Renaissance England*, 1990. The practice perhaps derived from classical haruspicy, official prophecy based upon the examination of the entrails of animals, etc.

46 All hail Shakespeare elsewhere (*3H6* 5.7.33–4, *R2* 4.1.169–71) associates this phrase with Judas's betrayal of Jesus, as do his contemporaries (see 'the All-haile of a second *Judas*' in *A Letter . . . containing a true Report of a strange Conspiracie* (1599), sig. B2r, and the York and Chester cycles of mystery plays (see M. Hattaway (ed.), *3H6*, 1992, 5.7.34 n.)). See 1.5.53n.

46 Glamis Metre sometimes requires a disyllable (Gla-miss); elsewhere, modern productions often employ the modern monosyllable, 'Glahms'. The name might have had a particular resonance for Shakespeare and his audience. *Scotland*, p. 320a, reports the trial (1537) of Jane Douglas, Lady Glamis, for attempting to poison James V; she was convicted on false evidence and burned at the stake. Perhaps misled by the manner of execution, subsequent writers recorded her crime as witchcraft. See Robert Pitcairn, *Ancient Criminal Trials in Scotland*, I, pt 1 (1833), 187–98.

48 king For the audience, only this title is a surprise because we know Duncan has already awarded Cawdor's title to Macbeth (1.2.65); theatrically, the witches' apparent foreknowledge is minimised.

49 start recoil, flinch, make a nervous gesture or movement. For this moment on stage, see p. 81 above.

49–50 fear . . . fair Alliteration ('start', 'seem', 'sound', and 'fear', 'fair') strikes the ear, but the

Are ye fantastical, or that indeed
Which outwardly ye show? My noble partner
You greet with present grace and great prediction
Of noble having and of royal hope
That he seems rapt withal. To me you speak not.
If you can look into the seeds of time
And say which grain will grow and which will not,
Speak then to me, who neither beg nor fear
Your favours nor your hate.

FIRST WITCH Hail.

SECOND WITCH Hail.

THIRD WITCH Hail.

FIRST WITCH Lesser than Macbeth, and greater.

SECOND WITCH Not so happy, yet much happier.

THIRD WITCH Thou shalt get kings, though thou be none.
So all hail Macbeth and Banquo.

FIRST WITCH Banquo and Macbeth, all hail.

MACBETH Stay, you imperfect speakers. Tell me more.
By Finel's death, I know I am Thane of Glamis,
But how of Cawdor? The Thane of Cawdor lives
A prosperous gentleman, and to be king
Stands not within the prospect of belief,

55 rapt] F (wrapt) 69 Finel's] *This edn; Sinells* F. *See Commentary*

evocative, morally puzzling wordplay on fear/fair 'is based on antithesis, not identity' (Cercignani, p. 235) between 'fear' and 'fair'. Compare the contrasts of 'foul' and 'fair' (36 above and 1.1.12), and of 'fear' and 'foully' (see 3.1.2–3 and n.).

51 fantastical imaginary, products of (our) fantasy.

53 present grace immediate favour. Compare the last (1.2.64) and next (136) uses of the adjective.

54 noble having . . . royal hope i.e. new title of honour . . . hoped-for title of king.

54 having possession.

55 rapt entranced. See 141 n. below.

56 seeds of time sources of the future. Compare Warwick's claim that 'a man may prophesy, / With a near aim, of the main chance of things / As yet not come to life, who in their seeds / And weak beginning lie intreasured' (*2H4* 3.1.82–5), and see 4.1.58 n.

58–9 neither beg . . . nor your hate i.e. Banquo neither begs your favours nor fears your hate. Alliteration and rhetorical hyperbaton make the line confusing and ambiguous.

65 get beget, father; perhaps also 'acquire, obtain'.

69 Finel Historically, Finel (or Finley or Findlaech) was Macbeth's father (see Bullough, VII, 488 n. 3), and that name should be substituted here just as 'Forres' is substituted for F's 'Soris' (see 37 n.); F's '*Sinells*' is an ancient error, the result of a *ſ*/*f* error in Holinshed (*Scotland*, p. 168b) and in his source, the Dundee historian Hector Boece (also known as Boethius).

70–1 The Thane . . . gentleman This (like 106) is a locally effective objection, but logically inconsistent for a speaker who confronted 'rebellious' Cawdor 'with self-comparisons' (1.2.55–6) and could presumably expect him to suffer capital punishment for treason, as he does (1.4.3 ff.). The inconsistency is less noticeable because the audience does not yet know Cawdor has died; it may have arisen through simple oversight or through 1.2 having been written or revised after 1.3.

72 prospect mental looking forward, consideration of something future (*OED* Prospect *sb* 8a, citing this line as its first example).

No more than to be Cawdor. Say from whence
You owe this strange intelligence, or why
Upon this blasted heath you stop our way
With such prophetic greeting? Speak, I charge you.
Witches vanish

BANQUO The earth hath bubbles, as the water has,
And these are of them. Whither are they vanished?

MACBETH Into the air, and what seemed corporal,
Melted, as breath into the wind. Would they had stayed.

BANQUO Were such things here as we do speak about?
Or have we eaten on the insane root,
That takes the reason prisoner?

MACBETH Your children shall be kings.

BANQUO You shall be king.

MACBETH And Thane of Cawdor too: went it not so?

BANQUO To th'selfsame tune and words – who's here?

Enter ROSS *and* ANGUS

~~ROSS The king hath happily received, Macbeth,~~
~~The news of thy success, and when he reads~~
~~Thy personal venture in the rebels' sight,~~
~~His wonders and his praises do contend~~
~~Which should be thine or his. Silenced with that,~~
~~In viewing o'er the rest o'th'selfsame day,~~
~~He finds thee in the stout Norwegian ranks,~~

76 SD] F (*in right margin after* you) 89 sight] *This edn;* fight F. *See Supplementary Note, p. 241 below*

74 intelligence news, information (*OED* Intelligence *sb* 7a).

75 blasted blighted. Supernatural agency or planetary influence may be implied (so *OED* Blasted *ppl a* 1, quoting this line). 'The heath which is *blasted* in a double sense – both barren and accursed – affords the right setting for the asexual witches . . .' (Mahood, p. 134).

76 charge command, order.

76 SD *vanish* See 1.1.13 SD n.

79 corporal material, physical, having a body (*OED* Corporal *a* 2).

82 on of (Abbott 181).

82 insane causing insanity (*OED* Insane *a* 3, quoting only this line). Discussing a European writer on witchcraft, Scot (III, 3) mentions witches' requirements for 'powders and roots to intoxicate withall'; compare 'Mens sences, sudden altering out of reason, / Doe bode ill lucke, or do fore-shew some treason' (Thomas Andrewe, *The Unmasking of a feminine Machiavell* (1604), sig. E1v).

86 selfsame tune identical meaning. Whately (p. 48) thinks 'tune' ridicules the witches' prophecy, but compare 4.3.238n.

88 reads understands, discerns. *OED* has no strictly apposite meaning, but unless we assume some written report of Macbeth's deeds, the usage must be even more figurative than in Feste's remark about Malvolio's letter: 'to read his right wits is to read thus' (*TN* 5.1.298–9).

89 sight See Supplementary Note, p. 241 below.

90–1 Duncan, at once admiring Macbeth's actions and praising them, finds himself suspended between silence and speech, awe and the impulse to reward.

92 selfsame identical, same. The echo of 86 suggests that Macbeth's honourable martial success and his plan to kill Duncan are themselves 'selfsame'.

93 stout valiant, brave (*OED* Stout *adj* and *adv* 3a).