4.3 *Enter* MALCOLM *and* MACDUFF

MALCOLM Let us seek out some desolate shade and there
Weep our sad bosoms empty.
MACDUFF ~~Let us rather~~
~~Hold fast the mortal sword and like good men~~
~~Bestride our downfall birthdom;~~ each new morn,
New widows howl, new orphans cry, new sorrows
Strike heaven on the face, that it resounds
As if it felt with Scotland and yelled out
Like syllable of dolour.
MALCOLM What I believe, I'll wail;
~~What know, believe; and what I can redress,~~
~~As I shall find the time to friend, I will.~~
What you have spoke, it may be so perchance.
This tyrant, whose sole name blisters our tongues,
Was once thought honest; you have loved him well –
He hath not touched you yet. I am young, but something
You may discern of him through me, and wisdom

Act 4, Scene 3 4.3] F (*Scaena Tertia.*) 4 downfall] F; down-fall'n *Johnson* (*conj. Warburton*) 15 discern] F (discerne); deserve *Theobald*

Act 4, Scene 3

The setting is uncertain: near enough the out-of-doors to make seeking a 'desolate shade' (1) plausible, but close to a room of state where King Edward touches for the Evil (139 ff.) This scene often puzzles audiences and has an unsettling effect upon the play's treatment of its own representation; see pp. 88–93 above.

3 fast firmly, tightly.

3 mortal fatal, death-dealing.

3–4 like good men . . . birthdom The image is of soldiers standing astride a fallen comrade to protect him from further injury; Capell (*Notes*, p. 24) cites Falstaff's request before the Battle of Shrewsbury: 'Hal, if thou see me down in the battle and bestride me, so; 'tis a point of friendship' (*1H4* 5.1.121–2).

4 downfall downfallen, fallen from prosperity. The modern form is 'downfallen', but 'downfall' is needed metrically and also occurs in F at *1H4* 1.3.135 (where Q reads 'down-trod').

4 birthdom inheritance, birthright; perhaps 'native kingdom'. This line is *OED*'s sole citation for the word.

8 Like Similar, identical.

8 dolour sadness.

8 wail bewail, lament.

10 to friend as a friend, on my side (*OED* Friend *sb* 6b).

11 spoke See 1.4.3 n.

12 sole alone, unaccompanied (*OED* Sole *a* 6). Macbeth's name alone is sufficient to blister 'our tongues'. The line may recall the proverbial 'Report has a blister on her tongue' (Dent R84).

14 He hath not touched you yet Either (1) Macduff follows Macbeth loyally and is therefore safe, or (2) Macduff continues to love Macbeth only because Macduff has not yet been 'touched' (as Malcolm has).

15 You may discern of him through me Macduff may see ('discern') a future Macbeth in Malcolm. Theobald's emendation is plausible ('discerne' and 'discerue' are easily confused in manuscript) and treats the line as Malcolm's fear that Macduff seeks advancement through betraying Malcolm to Macbeth, but the change devalues 'I am young' (14).

15 and wisdom 'i.e. you may discern the wisdom' (Brooke), or 'and 'tis wisdom' (Upton, pp. 314–15).

To offer up a weak, poor, innocent lamb
T'appease an angry god.
MACDUFF I am not treacherous.
MALCOLM But Macbeth is.
A good and virtuous nature may recoil
In an imperial charge. But I shall crave your pardon:
That which you are, my thoughts cannot transpose;
Angels are bright still, though the brightest fell.
Though all things foul would wear the brows of grace,
Yet grace must still look so.
MACDUFF I have lost my hopes.
MALCOLM Perchance even there where I did find my doubts.
Why in that rawness left you wife and child,
Those precious motives, those strong knots of love,
Without leave-taking? I pray you,
Let not my jealousies be your dishonours,
But mine own safeties; you may be rightly just,
Whatever I shall think.
MACDUFF Bleed, bleed, poor country.
Great tyranny, lay thou thy basis sure,
For goodness dare not check thee; wear thou thy wrongs,

17 god] F (God)

16 innocent lamb In the Christian tradition, the lamb emblematises innocence, and a proverbial expression, 'As innocent as a lamb' (Dent L34.1), appears about the time *Macbeth* was composed.

18–20 Malcolm seems to worry that Macduff's originally noble nature has decayed under Macbeth's royal command, but the lines may also reflect upon Macbeth's own degeneration and thus recall Holinshed's praise (*Scotland*, pp. 171b and 172b) for the historical Macbeth's first ten years on the throne.

19 recoil fall back, degenerate (*OED* Recoil v^1 3b, quoting as its last example 'Be revenged, / Or she that bore you was no queen, and you / Recoil from your great stock' (*Cym.* 1.6.126–8)). Shakespeare uses the word only three times in this sense; it might have been suggested here by *Scotland*, p. 175b, where 'recoiled' describes Macbeth's withdrawal to Dunsinane.

20 charge burden.

20 crave beg, ask (*OED* Crave *v* 2b); not 'yearn for' (Crave *v* 5).

21 Compare 'your mistrust cannot make me a traitor' (*AYLI* 1.3.56).

22 the brightest Satan, one of whose names is 'Lucifer' (light-bearer). Brightness is no assurance of truth: 'for Satan himselfe is transfourmed into an angel of lyght. Therefore it is no great thyng though [if] his ministers also be transfourmed as the ministers of righteousnesse' (2 Cor. 11.14–15); compare Banquo's worry, 1.3.122–3.

23 brows face, or appearance (a figuratively extended meaning).

25 there i.e. Scotland, or under Macbeth's tyranny, or Macduff's leaving of his family (?).

26 rawness imperfection, incompleteness. This line is the only citation for a figurative meaning under *OED* Rawness 1. Clarendon compares Williams's challenge to the king concerning dead soldiers' 'children rawly left' (*H5* 4.1.141). Here, the 'rawness' is partly social: Macduff did not bid his family good-bye, but the aborted ceremony also stands for a failure of love and duty (compare Lady Macduff's anger, 4.2.1 ff.).

29 jealousies suspicions, mistrust (*OED* Jealousy 5).

32 basis foundation, base. This line is the first citation at *OED* Basis 8.

33 check limit, control.

The title is affeered. Fare thee well, lord,
I would not be the villain that thou think'st
For the whole space that's in the tyrant's grasp,
And the rich East to boot.

MALCOLM Be not offended.
~~I speak not as in absolute fear of you:~~
I think our country sinks beneath the yoke;
It weeps, it bleeds, and each new day a gash
Is added to her wounds. I think withal
There would be hands uplifted in my right,
And here from gracious England have I offer
Of goodly thousands. But for all this,
When I shall tread upon the tyrant's head,
Or wear it on my sword, yet my poor country
Shall have more vices than it had before,
More suffer, and more sundry ways than ever,
By him that shall succeed.

MACDUFF What should he be?

MALCOLM It is myself I mean – in whom I know
All the particulars of vice so grafted
That when they shall be opened, black Macbeth

B

34 The] F; Thy *Malone* 34 affeered] *Hanmer;* affear'd F

34 The title is affeered Either (1) the epithet ('tyranny') is confirmed (= 'affeered'), or (2) the valid claim and claimant are frightened ('afeared': see *OED* Afear). These two possibilities, one referring to Macbeth, the other to Malcolm, depend upon a pun: affeered/afeared. Malone's emendation, 'Thy', is graphically possible, but F's sentence seems to alternate between clauses devoted to Macbeth ('Great tyranny . . .' and 'wear thou . . .') and clauses devoted to Malcolm ('For goodness . . .' and 'The title . . .').

37 to boot in addition.

38 absolute perfect, entire (*OED* Absolute 4, 5, 6, especially 5).

39–100 The sequence of lament for Scotland, of vices recounted and elaborated, and of Macduff's responses, closely follows *Scotland*, pp. 174b–175b, but may also owe something to Samuel's attempt to dissuade the Israelites from adopting monarchical government (1 Sam. 8.9–20), a passage quoted and extensively discussed by James VI in *True Lawe*, pp. 62–7.

39–41 I think . . . wounds These lines may allude to Jesus's suffering on the way to crucifixion.

40 gash The word recalls the 'twenty trenchèd gashes' (3.4.27) inflicted upon Banquo.

43 England i.e. the King of England, Edward the Confessor.

44 thousands i.e. thousands of soldiers (to support Malcolm's claim).

48 sundry various, diverse.

49 What Who (Abbott 254, citing numerous examples of 'What is he' to mean 'Of what kind or quality is he'). Macduff is not dehumanising or treating as a monster Macbeth's hypothetical successor.

50–1 myself . . . so grafted Compare 'I will chide no breather in the world but myself, against whom I know most faults' (*AYLI* 3.2.280–1).

51 grafted 'made part of my being' (NS). The botanical metaphor describes the gardener's joining of one plant or species with another; compare the 'ingrafted love' Antony 'bears to Caesar' (*JC* 2.1.184) and 'an engraff'd madness' (*TNK* 4.3.48–9).

52–4 Many proverbial analogies and phrases – 'As white as snow' (Dent S591), 'To make black white' (Dent B440), 'As pure as snow' (Dent I1), 'As innocent as a lamb' (Dent L34.1) – may make Malcolm's speech plainly ironic.

52 opened i.e. born, made known. The metaphor is of a flower's bud (see 'grafted' (51 and n.)), but

Will seem as pure as snow, and the poor state
Esteem him as a lamb, being compared
With my confineless harms.

MACDUFF Not in the legions
Of horrid hell can come a devil more damned
In evils to top Macbeth.

MALCOLM I grant him bloody,
~~Luxurious, avaricious, false, deceitful,~~
Sudden, malicious, smacking of every sin
That has a name. But there's no bottom, none,
In my voluptuousness: your wives, your daughters,
Your matrons, and your maids could not fill up
The cistern of my lust, and my desire
All continent impediments would o'erbear
That did oppose my will. Better Macbeth,
Than such an one to reign.

MACDUFF Boundless intemperance
In nature is a tyranny; it hath been
Th'untimely emptying of the happy throne
And fall of many kings. But fear not yet
To take upon you what is yours: ~~you may~~
~~Convey your pleasures in a spacious plenty~~
~~And yet seem cold. The time you may so hoodwink.~~
~~We have willing dames enough; there cannot be~~
~~That vulture in you to devour so many~~
~~As will to greatness dedicate themselves,~~

59 smacking] F; smoaking F2–4 72 cold.] F; cold, *Theobald* 72 hoodwink.] F (hoodwink:) 74 you] *Collier*; you, F

may also include 'dissection . . . Malcolm and Macbeth as moral cadavers' (Mackinnon, p. 73).

55 **confineless** unconfined, limitless. This line is the sole citation under *OED* Confineless (Schäfer).

55 **legions** multitudes, hordes. The word is used biblically of angels (Matt. 26.53); compare 22.

58 **Luxurious** Lecherous, lascivious. See 'rump-fed' (1.3.5 and n.).

59 **Sudden** Rash, impetuous (*OED* Sudden 2b).

59 **smacking** having the flavour of. The later Folios' reading is a variant spelling.

63 **cistern** (water) tank; large vessel (especially for holding liquor). The Shakespearean connotations are always negative; see *Oth.* 4.2.61, *Ant.* 2.5.95, and *TNK* 5.1.46–7.

64 **continent** self-restraining (*OED* Continent *a* 1). The word has resonances – of 'containing' and 'land-mass' – which join with 'cistern' (63) to make Malcolm's imagined lust a watery force of nature overwhelming the land; compare the aftermath of Duncan's murder (2.3.106–7 and n.).

66–7 **Boundless intemperance . . . tyranny** Limitless uncontrol is a form of natural tyranny (?). Macduff analogises 'voluptuousness' (61) or 'lust' (63), private sins, with 'tyranny', a political sin. His next words (67–9) suggest how the two cannot be separated in the behaviour (and the fate) of a king.

71 **Convey** Carry on, manage (*OED* Convey v^1 12).

72 **hoodwink** blindfold, deceive.

73–6 **there cannot be . . . inclined** i.e. you cannot be so voracious as to consume the many women who will volunteer to serve (sexually) your high rank, once it is known you desire them.