

VERDI'S MACBETH

A CONSIDERATION OF THE OPERA
AGAINST THE BACKGROUND OF THE RISORGIMENTO
AND IN RELATION TO ITS SHAKESPEAREAN
SOURCE

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DURBAN, 1982

Submitted in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in the Department of
Music, University of Natal.

The artist who represents his
country and his time necessarily
becomes universal, now just as
in the future.

Giuseppe Verdi

PREFACE

As with all probes into relatively unexplored fields, this dissertation must necessarily raise far more questions for the reader than it can hope to offer definitive solutions to. That is not undesirable however, as some of these lines of thought may germinate in the more widely informed minds of experienced Verdians, and may therefore ultimately fit together many pieces of the so-far fragmented jig-saw puzzle.

Except where indicated in the text by means of footnotes, the entire dissertation is the result of my own work. However thanks are due to my supervisors, Professor C. J. Ballantine and Mr. W. H. Bizley, for their suggestions and encouragement, and to my friend Dr. Beverly Parker for her constructive antagonism to the subject, which continually forced me to re-evaluate my premises and thought processes.

Grateful acknowledgement is also made to the Human Sciences Research Council for financial assistance.

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INTRODUCTION

Much of the work on Verdi which is published is representative of superficial, unsociological musicology. A primary reason for this is because so-called scholarship has ignored the fundamental truth that thought is sociologically determined. That is, men see things the way they do because of their place, position and time in society. It therefore follows that great art which is created by men of a particular time cannot remain uncommitted to that environment and age. Its essential elements are products of its generating source; it is the social and human context which gives it its meaning.

More so than many composers, Verdi was consciously committed to the politics of his time, being specifically identified with the Italian Risorgimento which aimed at a free and united Italy. The various categories which may be abstracted from his music did not simply arise out of his psyche. They were given to him by the realities and social dynamics of his time, and they are the raw materials of his work, its structural determinants. In short, Verdi's music is intimately bound to the aspirations and efforts of nineteenth-century Italy. Studied chronologically as an entity, his work represents a significant, progressively developing statement of historical, political, philosophical and social change of the era. Macbeth, composed in 1847, one year before the 1848 revolutions, has therefore, a

position of particular interest within the whole of his work.

If the above hypothesis is correct, it also follows that the theme in Shakespeare was a theme in Shakespeare's time. And if Shakespeare is of use to Verdi, it is at least in some measure because Shakespeare is of use to the Italian people of nineteenth-century Italy. If the connection between the two can be established, it could be of consequence in our understanding of Verdi. Having examined the evidence as to the nature of the social orientation and commitment of both Verdi and Shakespeare to their respective societies, an initial yet secondary purpose of this dissertation is to posit some questions regarding unique links between them as men and artists, which may lead towards a definition of structural affinity between them.

More importantly, Verdi's organization of the Shakespearean material will be examined, leading to a consideration of the opera's Risorgimento connections. These can be determined most meaningfully in the light of the above. The primary purpose, then, is twofold, and discussion of the work in Chapter Four will have this dual aspect kept in view throughout. It is not only what Verdi was doing in writing Macbeth that is of concern here, but also why he was composing what he did, and how he attempted to achieve what he wanted by using a Shakespearean drama within the context of the Risorgimento.

PART I

SOCIO-HISTORICAL AND SOCIO-
POLITICAL BACKGROUND

CHAPTER I

VERDI AND THE RISORGIMENTO

The Risorgimento to 1848

The years immediately preceding 1815 had witnessed a dual revolution in Europe in which the Italian peninsula had no integral part. The Industrial Revolution in Britain was in some respects both social and political, but it was predominantly economic. The political, and more particularly the social aspects of the upheaval were a result of the economic revolution much more than a cause. Ultimately Britain, and England specifically, became the primary influence in the development of nineteenth-century European economy. The French Revolution, on the other hand, was in the first instance a mass social revolution,¹ with its most immediate and far-reaching effects for the rest of Europe being the establishment of French political and ideological

¹E. J. Hobsbawm, The Age of Revolution (New York: Mentor, 1962), p. 75. Hobsbawm enlarges on this distinction of a dual revolution thus: "Britain provided the model for its [nineteenth-century economy] railways and factories, the economic explosive which cracked open the traditional economic and social structures of the non-European world; but France made its revolutions and gave them their ideas, to the point where a tricolor of some kind became the emblem of virtually every emerging nation, and European (or indeed world) politics between 1789 and 1917 were largely the struggle for or against the principles of 1789.... France provided the vocabulary and the issues of liberal and radical-democratic politics for most of the world. France provided the first great example, ~~the concept of the vocabulary of nationalism....~~ [The French Revolution] was, alone of all the revolutions which preceded and followed it a mass social revolution and immeasurably more radical than any comparable upheaval." Ibid., pp. 75-76.

primacy in the nineteenth-century. Having no integral connections with the initial causes of the dual revolution, Italy after 1815 nevertheless experienced profound spin-offs of that revolution. From our historical standpoint it would seem that the consequent Italian revolts were primarily rooted in social unrest which necessarily had political ramifications, for it is virtually truistic to say that wherever poverty and hunger is found, violence is liable to break out at the slightest provocation.¹

Italy at the beginning of the century was a politically divided peninsula of small principalities and duchies which similarly constituted no social entity. After the Congress of Vienna in 1815, having relieved the French of most of their power in the peninsula, Austria was, directly in some areas, and indirectly in others, almost completely in control. The four leading powers at the Congress (England, Austria, Russia and Prussia) continued to keep Italy as an unrelated collection of weak states and duchies, thus preventing any possibility of the emergence of a powerful united nation. Italy was a forbidden word. If, however, the powers had not already felt an uneasy conviction that Italy was more than a word, that it was in fact a profound concept which had the propensity of developing significantly and

¹"...in Milan [there were] only 12 students, white-collar workers or landlords among the 350 dead of the insurrection. It was their hunger which powered the demonstrations that turned into revolutions." Hobsbawm, The Age of Capital 1848-1875 (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1975), p. 15. See also Denis Mack Smith, The Making of Italy, 1796-1870 (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), pp. 9-10. This introduction is probably the best summary of causes and events of the Risorgimento.

and dangerously as far as Austrian domination was concerned, there would have been no urge to ban it. As late as 1847 Metternich high-handedly defined Italy as a "geographic expression"¹ in an attempt to ignore or defy Italian nationalism and retain Austria's hold.

The idea of Risorgimento (resurgence), the awakening of a cultural and political awareness, developed from the early part of the century until its fulfilment in the unification of the peninsula in 1861, and was initially the product of an intellectual and predominantly radical minority. A growing national consciousness was its most important aspect, and currently the word is used most commonly to denote the actual movement towards the unification of Italy. The Risorgimento nevertheless received impetus from several directions, not least of which was Mazzini's mystical and exalted message.² The development of the Risorgimento too was diverse and not wholly political.

Writers such as Alfieri, Leopardi and Manzoni (one of Verdi's most highly revered acquaintances in his own estimation) were key figures in the emergence and development of an intensely patriotic and nationalistically orientated Italian literature. The simultaneous increase in the organization and power of the censorship is sufficient

¹Prince Metternich, Aus Metternich's nachgelassenen Papieren (Vienna, 1883), vol. VII, pp. 388-9, quoted in Mack Smith, The Making of Italy, 1796-1870 (New York: Harper, 1968), p. 123.

²Giuseppe Montanelli, Memorie sull'Italia e specialmente sulla Toscana dal 1814 al 1850 (Turin, 1853), vol. I, pp. 32-47, quoted in Mack Smith, The Making of Italy, 1796-1870, pp. 56-63.

witness to the importance of this literature within the Risorgimento fermentation, even though its distribution was not wide.

The governing politics of the peninsula in the early part of the century (mostly foreign), and the concept of national awareness were therefore obviously at variance. Austria ultimately became the big evil to the nationalistic cause and most of the many-sided grievances similarly became aimed chiefly in her direction. Tensions which gave the political side of the Risorgimento impetus were, however, much more complex than a foreign power/oppressed subject antipathy.

Of the people living in the peninsula, the vast majority were slow to comprehend, let alone accept the idea of a united Italy. Due to ancient rivalries between different regions, many even welcomed foreign powers because they were uninvolved in local antagonisms.¹ Even after the partial successes of the 1848 revolutions the nationalistic revolts did not have the whole-hearted support of the conservative majority. While Italy was not as economically backward as some parts of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and consequently living conditions were not as severe, Italy remained primarily agrarian and the fundamental concerns of the Italians were not who governed them or which type of constitution was politically and economically the most acceptable, but rather the availability of sufficient food for their stomachs and clothes for their backs. During

¹Mack Smith, The Making of Italy, p. 2.

the early years, by and large the rural population had been adequately self-sufficient, and it therefore required longer to imbue them with a national vision that led to action than it did the minority of urban poor who were not self-sufficient, and consequently easily stirred up to revolt. However, as the century progressed, the increasing population pressed more severely on the food supplies, and the self-sufficiency of the large rural population became less significant as a drawback than formerly. It was then that the Risorgimento took on its most fundamentally social nature.

This internal drawback to the cause of unification was possibly more potent than any external adversity. Another problem was the lack of a common language. Dialects within the peninsula were so dissimilar that people of neighbouring, let alone distant regions, had difficulty in communication.

The result of these political and social complexities was a triangular interaction between the mass of the people, foreign powers within the peninsula, and the early radicals of the Risorgimento. To further complicate matters, these radicals were by no means a united group with a clearly defined course of action in striving towards the goal of an independent and united country. Only from our removed historical perspective can we begin to define clearly the untidy development of the dual purpose of the Risorgimento: on the one hand the throwing off of foreign domination, and on the other the unification of the peninsula into one political entity. In the early stages the dual nature of the goal was seemingly not always kept clearly in view by

key agitators of the movement. On occasion the revolts appear to have been concerned only with the throwing off of foreign domination, with little idea of what was to replace it. In hind-sight this may appear difficult to apprehend, but the realization pinpoints the disorganization of the whole affair.¹

Napoleon's near success in uniting Italy around 1800 was a significant factor in the inspiration of a nationalistic vision amongst the militant radicals. The earliest radicals of the Risorgimento who made their first impact in Naples around 1810, were known as Carbonari. The Carboneria were similar groups of revolutionary-minded people which emerged throughout the peninsula, motivated by a hatred of Austria, but without any central organization. Their most notable achievements were the starting of small-scale revolutions in Naples in 1820, and in Piedmont in 1821. Their ultimate impact was thus minimal, but their activities were indicative of the unrest that was about to precipitate significant change in the peninsula.

More important were the effects of La Giovane Italia (Young Italy), an organization of patriotic republicans, under forty years of age, founded in 1831 by Giuseppe Mazzini, who had himself been arrested in 1830 for his involvement in Carbonari activities. He was exiled and spent most of the fermentation years outside of his country, endeavour-

¹A fundamental reason why it took Italy so long to achieve independent unification, in relation to the rest of the continent is pithily summarized by Barzini, "Winning wars, after all, is the ultimate test, not of the quality of single men, but of their capacity to work together and accept common sacrifices." Luigi Barzini, The Italians (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1966), p. xiii.

ing to stir up enthusiasm for the cause while in England and France. By 1833 the membership was around 60,000.

The organization published a clandestine newspaper, Giovane Italia through which they propagated their revolutionary principles. Secondly, they proposed to muster a sufficient force to unseat governments of oppression in the Italian states. Again, the abstract ideas were more philosophically profound than the reality of their impact. "It was a coalition of potential revolutionaries to whom the negative idea of overthrowing governments served as a social link, while they did not bother about their different opinions on politics or religion."¹ Nevertheless, through the 1830s and 40s La Giovane Italia and particularly its leader was a significant factor in the radical politics of the peninsula.

Mazzini's exile isolated him somewhat from trends of thought in the peninsula. He was therefore unaware that in the 1840s an element of the enlightened aristocracy and the landed bourgeoisie of the north were tending towards reform rather than revolution. Of the leaders, Count Cavour is undoubtedly the most significant, and at a later date he and Verdi shared a friendship which became important in Italian politics.

In summary, Italy featured in each of the three main waves of revolution which swept Europe between 1815 and 1848.² As far as Italy was concerned the 1820 uprisings

¹Mack Smith, The Making of Italy, p. 61.

²Hobsbawm, The Age of Revolution, pp. 137-140.

in Naples and Piedmont involving members of the Carbonari, were disorganized and misdirected, and achieved virtually nothing. Far more significant for Italy as well as for her neighbours were the revolutionary events surrounding 1830, which involved all of Europe west of Russia. The Italian revolutionaries collaborated to more impressive effect, and various historians have speculated that had Austria not intervened, the uprisings might have succeeded. The fermentation of the early years was intensified until the Italian outbreaks of 1848, which were in fact the most widespread and significant of all of this third wave of European revolutions.

This then outlines the political scene into which Giuseppe Verdi was born and in which he began his composition- al writings amidst the rumblings of Italy's greatest impending internal crisis.

Many and varied romanticised stories of Verdi's ill-documented youth obscure much of the substantiated fact we have. That he was an Italian country peasant, raised in poverty, who nevertheless had the good fortune of being recognized and assisted in innumerable ways by a prosperous merchant and music-lover, Antonio Barezzi, is certain.

Verdi's peasant status was typical of the large majority of Italian-speaking people. Until the dual revolution, the feudal order had stood intact throughout nearly all of Europe. For a considerable time afterwards its principles persisted in varying degrees in Italy and parts of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, largely due to the fact that these regions had not had any integral part in the initial

stages of the revolution.

It was somewhat untypical, therefore, and still would have been so to a large extent even in England or France, that Verdi was able to step out of his social class, and by furthering the scanty education he received from tutors in the country town of Busetto, and later at Milan virtually unaided, become a vociferous member of the bourgeoisie.

As with earlier revolutionary outbreaks in Italy, the 1848 uprisings, spanning into 1849, were conducted substantially over the heads of an inactive rural population. The urban poor were galvanized into action when deteriorating social conditions warranted their participation, but it was largely an involvement incited by revolutionaries, and the people were, for the most part, without profound understanding of the underlying principles and ultimate goals.

Temporary successes were achieved by the radicals throughout the peninsula, in cities such as Naples, Palermo, Turin, Venice and Milan. Unfortunately for the revolutionary cause in expelling Austria, Pope Pius (of the Papal States) and Ferdinand II of Naples capitulated at a significant moment. There were other internal disunities such as the friction caused by King Charles Albert of Piedmont who seemed as eager to prevent the formation of republics as he was to defeat Austria's power in the peninsula.

The ultimate result by the end of 1849 was that virtually the entire peninsula, including Sicily, was again occupied by both Austrian and French troops. The short-

lived republican government in Rome headed by Mazzini, had collapsed. Garibaldi's defence of the city in May - June of 1849 was one of the high points of the Risorgimento. It had been "the springtime of the peoples, - and like spring, it did not last."¹

The national cause had been advanced, but many weaknesses had been exposed in these two years. Divisions had been opened up between republicans and monarchists, between different regions and neighbouring towns, between federalists and unitarists, radicals and conservatives, Catholics and anti-clericals. Personal differences too - for instance between Mazzini, Cattaneo, Garibaldi and Pisacane - contributed to the general feeling of disillusionment.²

Thus concluded a major phase of the Risorgimento, and simultaneously a particular stylistic period in Verdi's operatic writings, the period which produced Macbeth.

Verdi's Political Outlook and Involvement:
Its Result in His Work

Before the Copialettere which (with a few exceptions) date from 1844, few of Verdi's letters have survived. There is therefore no primary, and to date no secondary evidence of Verdi ever having participated in any blatantly revolutionary activities surrounding the 1830 uprisings or later. Nevertheless, as a student and young composer in Milan, Verdi must certainly have been aware of the political undercurrents and trends gathering momentum in the late thirties and early forties. Milan was the capital of Lombardy, one of the most developed of the Italian states, and, bordering directly on Austria, was one of the most militant. The liberals

¹Hobsbawm, The Age of Capital, p. 13.

²Mack Smith, The Making of Italy, p. 163.

were never hard-put to find sympathetic hearings in Milan.

Between 1844 and 1848 there are several politically orientated letters in the Copialettere, but their content is little more astounding than would be expected from any responsible citizen in a time of political crisis taking an active interest in his country's destiny. Considered proportionately within the vast bulk of the Copialettere, Verdi concerned himself very little with expressing his political ideas, hopes and fears in letters.¹

The evidence of Verdi's political awareness in this period is largely confined to his operatic writings. By his own admission the unwanted inspiration² to compose Nabucco (1842) came from reading the opening lines of the Hebrew Slaves' chorus in Solera's libretto which Merrelli challenged him to use,

Va, Pensiero, sull'ali dorate!
 va, ti posa sui clivi, sui colli,
 ove olezzano tepide e molli
 l'aure dolci del suolo natal!
 Del Giordano le rive saluta
 di Sionne le torri atterrate...
 Oh, mia patria sì bella e perduta!
 Oh, membranza sì cara e fatal!
 Arpa d'or dei fatidici vati,
 perchè muta dal salice pendi?
 Le memorie nel petto raccendi,
 ci favella del tempo che fu!
 O simile di Solima ai fati
 traggi un suono di crudo lamento,

¹Personal correspondence with Charles Osborne, ed. of Letters of Giuseppe Verdi (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1971).

²The inspiration to compose Nabucco was in a sense unwanted, because after two little-successful attempts at opera writing and much personal tragedy he had resolved not to write another note of opera. See Autobiographical Sketch in Franz Werfel and Paul Stefan, eds., Verdi: The Man in His Letters (New York: Vienna House, 1973), especially pp. 88-99.

O t'inspiri il Signore un concerto
che ne infonda al patire vertu!¹

The music of this great chorus, which was a very significant factor contributing to Verdi's fame, he infused with a nostalgia which deeply stirred the hearts of a passionate people who so easily identified themselves with the down-trodden Hebrew slaves. It was the first example of Verdi's early political position revealed in his work, which he thereafter consistently reinforced in his composition of the 1840s. Charles Osborne summarized it thus,

Verdi immediately and inadvertently became the composer of the Risorgimento.... I say inadvertently because we have no reason to suppose that, when he wrote 'Va, pensiero', Verdi had any intention other than to set the Biblical story of Solera's verse to the best of his ability. But his sympathies were with the Italian nationalist liberal cause and, although in the series of 'patriotic' operas that followed Nabucco he probably did not, with the exception of La Battaglia di Legnano, deliberately set out to write music for the cause, he was by no means displeased at the association made by his audiences.²

At this point it is necessary to define what is meant by political content in music and how it relates to Verdi's operas in a general sense, including, obviously, Macbeth. It is fundamental not to confuse the use of "political" with "patriotic" or "nationalistic". Any music

¹Fly, thought, on wings of gold; go settle upon the slopes and the hills, where, soft and mild, the sweet airs of our native land smell fragrant! Greet the banks of Jordan and Zion's toppled towers.... Oh, my country so lovely and lost! Oh, remembrance so dear and so fraught with despair! Golden harp of the prophetic seers, why dost thou hang mute upon the willow? Re-ignite our bosom's memories, and speak of times gone by! Mindful of the fate of Jerusalem, either give forth an air of sad lamentation, or else let the Lord imbue us with fortitude to bear our sufferings! (free translation by Peggie Cochrane)

²Osborne, Complete Operas of Verdi (London: Gollancz, 1968), p. 50.

may or may not be patriotic or nationalistic, depending on its content and intent. All music is necessarily political in so far as it is either reactionary or progressive.

As Hauser observed,¹ from the eighteenth century onwards every artist ultimately had to choose between two opposing orders; between allying with the world of the conservative aristocracy and that of the progressive bourgeoisie. (Hauser would have been more correct to have included the rising proletariat in his polarity of the nineteenth century.) By electing not to advocate one alternative, music automatically supports the other. If it chooses not to soothe the senses of the listener, not to give the listeners exactly what they want to hear in order that they might with an easy conscience continue to propagate the kind of life they find easy and comfortable, undisturbed, then it is at once in some sense condemning that life-style or some aspect of it and advocating change. As a general principle the two categories are mutually exclusive but inescapable.² Certainly good music never becomes unpolitical or uncommitted.

A sine qua non in determining the progressive or reactionary nature of art forms in the bourgeois era is the question of the presence and treatment of class struggle within a particular form, because in class society the social

¹Arnold Hauser, Naturalism, Impressionism, the Film Age, The Social History of Art, vol. 4 (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972), p. 4.

²It is not impossible that there could be an exception to the principle, where a particular piece of music hovers off-centre in relation to either of the categories, but the quality of that work might be called seriously into question. Good

ferment is always present, whether explicitly or under the surface.¹ A progressive interpretation and depiction of life within that society, in art, must consequently include the inescapability of class struggle. The mere fact of class struggle in a work is not, however, sufficient to determine the work's progressive or reactionary nature, as it might be admitted in a work for the purpose of condemning that work. It is consequently the manner in which class struggle exists and operates in a work which determines the progressiveness or reactionary nature of the work.

It follows that if particular works are found to be progressively political, in a time of national crisis such as during a revolutionary period they will also be patriotic or nationalistic, whether consciously or by implication. If it is by implication, the significance and impact is not necessarily any the less, and may in fact be more penetrating through the allusion. Furthermore, whether or not the works contain any specific patriotic material, they will reveal an emotional involvement with the cause; hence Osborne's assessment of Verdi not being displeased at the association of his works with the Risorgimento made by the audiences, even though they were not initially designed as instruments of the cause.

music communicates a consistent point of view. See Meredith Tax's article, "Culture is not Neutral, Whom Does it Serve?" in Lee Baxandall, ed., Radical Perspectives in the Arts, pp. 15-29, for an elaboration of some aspects of this point of view.

¹See Arnold Kettle, The Progressive Tradition in Bourgeois Culture in Radical Perspectives in the Arts, Lee Baxandall ed., (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), p. 159 ff.

Conversely, it does not automatically follow that if a work is patriotic or nationalistic it is politically progressive. It may appear to be; it may create an illusion of what it is not because of failing both to effect a penetrating criticism of the existing order and to carry through a revolutionary change necessary for the further development of that art within a constantly changing society.

The above-mentioned opera, La Battaglia di Legano, was composed at a time when it seemed as if Italy's hopes might be realized during 1848, and abundant instances in the libretto substantiate the intent of the work. For example the opening chorus:

Viva Italia! Un sacro patto
Tutti stringe i figli suoi:
Eso alfin cli tanti ha fatto
Un sol popolo d'eroi!
Le bandiere in campo spiega,
O Lombarda invitta Lega,
E discorra un gel per l'ossa
Al feroce Barbarossa.
Viva Italia forte ed una
Colla spada e col pensier!
Questo suol che a noi fu cuna,
Tomba sia dello stranier!¹

Verdi had met Mazzini in London in 1847, and at the politician's suggestion Verdi set the poem Suona La Tromba by patriot Goffredo Mameli, to music. The result was an overtly nationalistic hymn which Verdi hoped would, "...amid the music of the canon, soon be sung on the Lombardian plains."²

¹"Long live Italy! A holy pact unites all her sons, Making at last from many, A single nation of heroes! Invincible Lombard League. Unfurl your flags on the battle-field. Then will a fearful chill seize the Barbarossa. Long live Italy - strong and united In battle and in the spirit! This land which cradled us Shall be the invader's grave!"

²Werfel and Stefan, eds., Verdi, The Man in His Letters, p. 142.

The hymn was not ready for performance, however, until the revolution was virtually over. Verdi was clearly in support of the republican cause, although circumstances caused him to remain in Paris throughout the 1848 revolutions.¹ There is evidence to suggest that had Mazzini and the republicans ultimately triumphed, Verdi would have been a tribune in the resultant government.²

Apart from these two deliberately explicit works, a cursory glance at any of the libretti from Nabucco (1842) through to La Battaglia di Legnano (1849) however, will reveal an abundance of text which could have patriotic and revolutionary implications by being transposed by the audience from the dramatic milieu into local and contemporary settings.³ That these libretti are patriotic is therefore beyond question. A majority of them, including those after 1848 also contain evidence of class struggle in varying degrees. As Finkelstein points out, many of them

were among the first of the Italian tradition to show the feudal nobility in their true oppressive nature, with bloody feuds and insensate concepts of family 'honour' masking the most arrogant egotism. He gave the common people, such as the gypsy mother in Il Trovatore and the townspeople in Falstaff, the most warm and affecting musical characterizations. He

¹For Verdi's interest in events see Frank Walker, The Man Verdi (London: J. M. Dent and Sons Ltd., 1962), p. 187, and Werfel and Stefan eds., Verdi: The Man in His Letters, pp. 135-136.

²See Walker, The Man Verdi, p. 188.

³Other operas of the period are I Lombardi alla Prima Crociata, Ernani, I Due Foscari, Giovanna d'Arco, Alzira, Attila, I Masnadieri, Jerusalem and Il Corsaro.

broadened the entire human scope of opera with profound musical portrayals of character like Violetta in La Traviata and Rigoletto, seeing deeper humanity in these victims of the nobility than in the nobility themselves.¹

Anyone supporting Mazzini's cause would be of necessity, it would seem, entirely progressive, and such a person's work would consequently propound the same point of view. Yet even in terms of the class struggle, Finkelstein continues,

Frequently the struggles for freedom were portrayed as if they had been carried on solely by noble personages. The cliché persisted, presenting social struggles in terms of love affairs cutting across the opposing camps, in Romeo and Juliet manner.²

The cliché persisted because although Verdi evidently supported revolutionary progress, at least in specific instances, as his friendship and collaboration with men such as Mazzini would indicate, and he injected his libretti with innumerable allusions in favour of revolutionary progress, he failed to offer anything like a devastatingly penetrating criticism of the existing order. His was thus an incomplete progressiveness in expression. Nevertheless, analysis of the libretti alone would seem to indicate, with this reservation Finkelstein expressed, a progressive point of view and intention politically as well as patriotically. But what of the music itself?

The scores of the earlier works all bear a marked similarity in style. The most singular is Macbeth, for reasons to be discussed later.³ Furthermore, the style is

¹Sidney Finkelstein, How Music Expresses Ideas (New York: International Publishers, 1970), p. 87.

²Ibid., p. 88.

³Reasons more to do with Shakespeare than political

not substantially different from that of Verdi's immediate predecessors, Rossini, Donizetti or Bellini. Each work comprises the standard three or four acts with the usual sequence of set numbers such as cavatina, cabaletta and grand finale scenes to the first and last acts. Treatment of the orchestra and accepted voice distribution of major roles were also little altered. Verdi maintained a bipartite feeling in his arias which was a characteristic feature of early nineteenth-century opera, a style which resulted in the arias remaining tonally static.^{1, 2.}

It is in the area of tonality in nineteenth-century music that a most significant difference between a northern composer (the German is most representative in that century) and the Italian is seen. Seldom in Verdi or any of his predecessors exist the inherently revolutionary possibilities of the so-called sonata principle which Beethoven elucidated with such tremendous impact.³ Where and if they do exist they are not called into operation in a similar manner at all. Although a most powerful component, tonality is of course only one dimension of the totality of music in which the dialectical process of transformation through negation, may operate. Nevertheless this revolutionary transformation seems difficult to detect in Verdi's handling of rhythm, content or anything else.

¹See Budden, The Operas of Verdi, pp. 14, 15 for elaboration.

²Tonal stasis was not necessarily a weakness within a whole which was not striving towards uninterrupted continuity.

³See Christopher J. Ballantine, "Beethoven, Hegel and Marx," Music Review, vol. 33, no. 1, February 1972, pp. 34-46.

structure, texture or the corporate whole of his work either.

Verdi belonged to a very conservative musical tradition and he never broke away from it. He developed and refined elements of it, particularly in the last operas where he began working towards a more through-composed style, but the style was ultimately fundamentally unaltered, uncriticised. Refinement and transformation through negation are not synonymous. Verdi's late works were the logical climax and high point of a conservatism which, though individual, was not unique in the musical life of nations struggling towards national freedom and recognition in the nineteenth century.

But in a common understanding of the term, Verdi's music is not progressive because it does not carry through a revolutionary change necessary for the further development of his particular art within that society. That Verdi was the last great exponent of this tradition, that the fundamentally unaltered structure of Italian opera was, by the time of Verdi's later works, already becoming an anachronism in a new society which affirmed different values, would seem to attest adequately to an essential musical reactionism.

One school of thought would hold that in so far as Verdi was changing elements of style of his inherited tradition at all, adapting and refining them to suit his particular needs, he was composing in a progressive manner. Concomitant with this point of view is the supposition that for art to be progressive it is not necessarily consistently revolutionary. Accepting this viewpoint, it would be straightforward to evaluate Verdi's entire compositional career in

progressive terms, and in fact further research may prove this point of view to be justified.

If however, the second, more rigid sense of "progressive" is applied to Verdi's music, this is where the enigma of the political element in his music lies. Most of the time, and consistently in the works of the forties, Verdi seems to be expressing explicit, predominantly progressive textual ideas within a reactionary musical framework and in reactionary musical terminology.

A consideration of Verdi's expressed personal views in the light of the altered, though continued dual content of his composition after 1848 does not explain the problematical enigma for the forties works. It confirms, however, that this was a definite trend in Verdi's compositional career, and not just a peculiarity which existed for a short period.

From the conclusion of the 1848-49 revolutions onwards Verdi appeared to have become a great deal more conservative in political outlook, and this was coupled with a desire to remain out of the political limelight. Walker notes that between 1849 and 1859 there is no record whatsoever of Verdi's political views.

Comments on politics disappear from his letters as completely as does the patriotic, warlike view from his operas.¹

In 1859 Victor Emmanuel, King of Piedmont, and Cavour put into operation their plans for a move towards unification, and were aided by Garibaldi and his army in

¹Walker, The Man Verdi, p. 22.

the following year.¹ When the war resulted in allowing Parma, Modena and Tuscany to opt for a plebiscite with Piedmont, Verdi was selected as the representative from Busetto to convey the result of the plebiscite to Victor Emmanuel in Turin.² It was here that he met Cavour and became a supporter of the renewed but very different efforts towards unification. The final achievement of a United Kingdom of Italy under the leadership of these two men was a giant step forward as far as independence was concerned, but far from the realization of the republican vision.

Verdi's support of the Cavour regime is not an irreconcilable contradiction of his former republican ideals if seen in perspective. It seems that throughout his life Verdi was never as much concerned with upholding a particular ideology at any cost, as he was with advancing whatever might be to Italy's best advantage. He consequently accepted his election to parliament even though he would rather have remained out of the political forefront. The following excerpts from his correspondence are characteristic of his writing on his involvement in politics.

Letter to Minghelli Vaini³

January 23, 1861.

...the burdensome business of my nomination to parliament was discussed. The only purpose of my trip to Turin was to free myself from it. I didn't succeed, and I'm quite desperate about it. The more so since you are so much better prepared for parliamentary battles than an artist, who has only his poor name to recommend

¹Verdi was involved in drawing up and contributing to a subscription list to aid veterans and bereft families.

²See Walker, The Man Verdi, p. 224.

³Minghelli Vaini was defeated in the election due to popular support of Verdi, and the politician blamed Verdi.

him... I have not campaigned; I shall not campaign; I shall do nothing to be elected. If I should be elected, I will accept, heavy as the sacrifice will be for me... But I am firmly resolved to resign as soon as I can.¹

Letter to Angelo Mariani

January 1861.

Don't be surprised if you see me in Turin! Do you know why I'm here? In order to become a deputy. Other people go to great pains to be one, and I do everything possible to avoid it... I saw Cavour this morning...²

In other words, for the sake of Italy, Verdi allowed the musical fame he acquired from the wide appeal of his music to be a common factor of unity. In a revolution which was being conducted over the heads of a large majority of the population, many of whom could not even read, their national art and common denominator, opera, was a prime means of unifying them. Opera was a common denominator in Italy, because it enjoyed there the peculiar position of appealing to a vast cross-section of every stratum of society.

Verdi was less revolutionary minded than before, but this attitude can hardly be labeled as reactionary. He still advocated change, but of a less radical nature.

As noted above, the operas from Luisa Miller on are distinguished by a change in content from those of the forties. In them Verdi became much more concerned with the human personality; his works became less stylised and more realistic. As he refined his style there is less discrepancy between the essential conservatism of that style and the

¹Werfel and Stefan eds., Verdi the Man in His Letters, p. 223.

²Ibid., p. 222.

persisting cliché of the class struggle content,¹ but the discrepancy is not resolved.

There is absolutely no doubt that at all times Verdi strove to write the kind of music the people wanted to hear; he desired to be completely accessible to them. This probably explains the similar conservatism in the music of other peoples seeking independence and unification at the same time, such as the Czechs. To achieve its purpose as a unifying factor the art form had to have a wide reception. First and foremost Verdi was a composer of opera, the most social of arts, and while he was willing to stand up to the censors he could not, for financial reasons also, allow audience hostility to cause a work to be withdrawn after the premiere, as sometimes happened.² If he was to be assured of a favourable hearing, then, he had to express what he wanted to say in musical terminology which was not only accessible, but acceptable to them.

Another aspect of the problem may lie in the fact that nineteenth-century Italy was not an advanced bourgeois culture in comparison with some of her northern neighbours, hence the class struggle was not yet as intense as it was in other countries either; a factor which may be discovered

¹Finkelstein, How Music Expresses Ideas, p. 88. "Verdi did not take the step of representing the history of his own time in music [my underlining] and his portrayal of past history had limitations. Frequently the struggles for freedom were portrayed as if they had been carried on solely by noble personages. The cliché persisted, presenting social struggles in terms of love affairs cutting across the opposing camps, in Romeo and Juliet manner."

²See Budden, The Operas of Verdi, Vol. I., Introduction.

to exist in their music.¹

If up until 1848 many of the common people cared little who governed them as long as their social conditions were bearable, after 1848, when the national consciousness was well and truly awakened, the major political interest among them appears to have been the ejection of foreign domination rather than a major struggle for power between the various strata of society. If the development of bourgeois culture had progressed further, it is doubtful that the formation of the Kingdom of Italy under King Victor Emmanuel would have received the widespread support that it did. Furthermore, it is also certain that Verdi's operas would have received less of a peninsular acceptance among virtually every class than they did had they been more devastatingly undermining the values of an emerging dominant element who held significant power in the national power structure. As it was, the censors with whom Verdi tangled were the Austrians who felt threatened by the textual content of his work of the forties, and still required the transposition of location and time and ruler in Rigoletto (1851) before it could be performed. Their objections were confined exclusively to the libretti. There was nothing in the music that they could essentially object to.

Because the class struggle had not yet reached maximum tension, Verdi was not therefore compelled to choose as rigidly between allying himself with the

¹For an example as to how this is evidenced in the work of a northern composer, see Frida Knight, Beethoven and the Age of Revolution (United Kingdom: International Publishers, 1973).

conservative aristocracy or the progressive proletariat and bourgeoisie as a northern contemporary would have been. This does not alter the truth that the two political categories in music are mutually exclusive, for the enigma that occurs in Verdi's work can only occur in a form which incorporates more than one artistic element: opera is both music and drama, it is both pure music and text. Within each of these elements in Verdi's operas a different point of view is predominant; the music is essentially reactionary and the texts are for the most part progressive.

Summary

Verdi's position as a voice of the people during the Italian Risorgimento, a revolutionary age, is a rather unique one. During the earlier part of the movement there is little external evidence that he specifically identified with radical leaders such as Mazzini, other than that he wrote a hymn to the revolutionary cause, for Mazzini, and that he was not displeased at the associations the Italian people made between his works and the revolution. Internal evidence, however - the textual content of Verdi's operas of this period - strongly indicates that this is where his sympathies and hopes lay.

An enigma arises in that musically the works of the forties do not support the progressive textual thrust (progressive in the sense of aligning with the element of society which was not content to maintain the status quo, and which was bringing about radical social change). Exactly why the discrepancy exists from a sociological point of view is not

altogether clear at this point. Nevertheless in that contradiction the meaning for Verdi's own time was considerable. He expressed his own personal views which simultaneously supported and furthered the national cause during the Risorgimento, and he also simultaneously related to the people in a musical language which they could understand and wanted to listen to. He spoke meaningfully to his own time in its terminology. The fact that in later years he modified his political outlook, and that this was attested to in a change in his operatic content in the post-Risorgimento years does not affect the issue in terms of the present context, as the reactionary/progressive discrepancy already existed in his early works. While Verdi did not stake out a path for future operatic style, in spite of the enigma in his work he produced an honest distillation of that which his time and his society required of him.

CHAPTER II

VERDI AND SHAKESPEARE

Shakespeare the Elizabethan

The literary morass of useless speculation and complaining of the lack of precise information concerning Shakespeare's early years is, as A. L. Rowse points out,¹ indicative of a lack of understanding of the very age into which Shakespeare was born. The Elizabethans were not fundamentally interested in the biographies of their notable personages in the literary field, unless they were of the nobility or had additional claim to fame. Considering this, the documentation of the Bard's early life is in fact comparatively substantial.

He was born to a marriage of established Stratford families. Stratford is a Warwickshire town which became a self-governing borough during Shakespeare's lifetime. While it was still subject to the see of Worcester, Shakespeare's father, John, became bailiff (mayor) and thus occupied a position of prominence in town life. This is one reason Rowse suggests as to why Shakespeare's early life was better documented than was common. John Shakespeare was, however, not of gentile lineage, and thus did well in marrying Mary Arden, who came of a family of considerably more social standing than the Shakespeares. Rowse comments,

¹A. L. Rowse, Shakespeare the Man (St. Albans: Paladin, 1976), p. 19.

This is where Shakespeare got his emphasis upon gentility from - and, in fact, the characteristics of it in his behaviour, which marked him off from other theatre-folk, many of whom were decidedly ungentlemanly in their behaviour. Nor is it superfluous to point out that some social disparity between parents has an effect in sharpening the social awareness and sensibilities of a clever, observant child - D. H. Lawrence offers a case in point.¹

Concerning Shakespeare's education, Rowse continues, comparing him with Marlowe who was a thoroughbred intellectual, fascinated with abstract ideas as ends in themselves.

William Shakespeare, too, was an intellectual - in the best sense, not the perjorative: he was a naturally clever schoolboy, who picked up things quickly as he went along. There was his instinctive sense of language from the first, his early interest in all going on around him, particularly nature and the facts of nature, the life of the countryside. But ideas are not ends in themselves with him; intellectual issues are not the stuff of his plays: they arise out of the conflicts and collisions, the subtleties, the comedy and tragedy of life itself. His knowledge of human beings, of the human condition, has never been surpassed. He would not have been improved by going to the university.

His was the university of life - more exacting, more deeply informative. Though he had a perfectly adequate foundation from school, like any man of genius he was fundamentally self-educated.²

Obviously London was the place for a young actor and playwright to pursue a career, and this Shakespeare proceeded to do with brilliance and success. During the years of the 1582 - 83 plague, when several companies of players disappeared and the activities of the others were severely curtailed, Shakespeare found a patron in the Earl of Southampton. This established his connections with England's nobility. Thereafter he again worked mostly with a notable company, the Chamberlain's Men, which frequently performed for royalty. His works abound with specific

¹Rowse, Shakespeare the Man, p. 33.

²Ibid., pp. 36-37.

references to events and conditions concerning the royal circle, and several plays were written as a tribute to the reigning monarch. Macbeth was written in honour of King James shortly after the unsuccessful Gunpowder Plot was discovered.¹ After the death of Elizabeth in 1603, James took the Chamberlain's Men under his patronage as the King's Men, and Shakespeare, as a leader in the Company, became a sworn officer in the royal household. He had reached the pinnacle of his profession in terms of both skill and social recognition. Yet he never officially established himself in London; he was always "Shakespeare of Stratford on Avon". This is one hint at the reason why Shakespeare always maintained an understanding of people from all walks of life. He operated in the city, but his roots were still in the country.

Within the fairly rigidly defined Elizabethan social structure, his was consequently a rather unique position. Only in a profession such as his could he function as a bridge between the different strata of society, viewing them with an admirable degree of objectivity, as is reflected throughout his life's work, yet never abstracting himself from interacting in that dynamically diverse and changing society.

Most of Shakespeare's life coincided with the reign of Elizabeth I, and if for no more penetrating reason, this declared him to be an Elizabethan. The Queen ascended the throne of a bankrupt and insecure nation. She left it rich and powerful. When she died in 1603, England controlled the

¹For a detailed connection of the plays to contemporary events, see Rowse, Shakespeare the Man.

seas and challenged the intellectual hegemony of Italy or France. Historian Will Durant summarised her reign thus.

It was her indefinable spirit that counted, that baffled Europe and enthralled England, that gave spur and color to her country's flowering. She re-established the Reformation but she represented the Renaissance - the lust to live this earthly life to the full, to enjoy and embellish it every day. She was no exemplar of virtue, but she was a paragon of vitality.¹

Above all, the Elizabethan age was for England an epoch of transition. The prevalent conditions are very succinctly summarised by Robert Weimann.

Late sixteenth century English society, in its economic relations and political structure, its morals and manners, was in many significant aspects unlike those forms and organizations that we normally associate with either the hey-day of the feudal classes or the rise to power of the bourgeoisie. It was an age of social compromise and economic confusion which yet achieved politically, a temporary stability and a cultural balance distinctly its own.²

He continues, pointing out that in terms of economics, traditional forms of trade and agriculture existed side by side with the newly emerging modes of capitalist enterprise, from which an unprecedented and often conflicting number of heterogeneous developments and activities resulted. Many factors combined to tear down the structure of the traditional economy, and with it, obviously, those who controlled the economy, the landed barons. Weimann concludes,

But while the feudal aristocracy was no longer in a position to rule the country at large those sections that years later succeeded in winning the Civil War were as yet too immature to achieve political supremacy.

¹Will Durant, "The Age of Reason" vol. VII, The Story of Civilization (Simon and Schuster: New York, 1961), p. 13.

²Robert Weimann, "The Soul of the Age," Shakespeare in a Changing World, Arnold Kettle, ed. (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1964), p. 18.

The bourgeoisie, together with the 'improving' gentry and the lower middle classes that ultimately shared (or aspired to share) their modes of living, were politically not yet emancipated.... Like the merchants, the moneyed landlords who owned most of the abbey lands, enclosed the commons and introduced capitalist practices into agriculture, did not for a moment think of challenging the prerogative of the Tudor monarchs under whose peaceful rule they had obtained vast estates....

It was the crown and court which became the focal point of the nation's political, religious and cultural life. The Tudors...had overthrown the warring factions of the nobility and thus made possible that 'smooth-fac'd peace, with smiling plenty and fair prosperous days' of which the Elizabethans were so gratefully conscious.¹

As the Elizabethan period merged into the Jacobean, during the later years of Shakespeare's life, modern social theory and modern political theory began to develop. The orientation of society became predominantly naturalistic rather than religious. The changing trend in social and political theory was largely due to a changed conception of the nature and function of the church.

The early seventeenth century was a crucial period in Europe's history, and within that context England featured most significantly. Her geographical position as entrepot between continental Europe and America fostered the development of a new internal economic unity two centuries before it occurred in France, and two and a half before Germany. It was consequently in England, with the constitutional revolution, the powerful new bourgeoisie of bankers, ship-owners and merchants that the transformation of the structure of society was earliest, swiftest and most complete.

With the rapid transition, the commercial spirit

¹Ibid., pp. 18-19.

grew as London became one of the thriving marts and centres of the world. Westminster, where Parliament met, was then a separate city. There too, businessmen made themselves heard. By 1600 they could frighten the queen, and half a century later they beheaded the king.

The question as to why, when continental Europe had seen the flowering of its Renaissance in its various manifestations (originating in Italy as far back as the fourteenth century) and it had very definitely given way to the Age of Baroque by this time, England suddenly and briefly displayed some of the crowning glories of the entire Renaissance, has long been a debate of scholars. As to why the English Renaissance did not occur earlier, the standard platitudes concerning "traditional conservatism" are hardly socially penetrating or even marginally explanatory. Briefly, from the time of Henry VIII England had been beset by wars, internal troubles and bankruptcy. When Elizabeth came to the throne in 1558, a number of years not rent by open faction commenced, and concentration on developing cultural activities was more easily possible. Considering the entire century surrounding the period, and particularly in the light of the economic trend (the economy being the base of society and its singly most important determining factor) it seems eminently probable that the reason why there was a brief and brilliant flowering of Renaissance ideas and ideals during Elizabeth's reign lies precisely in the fact that it was a transitional epoch. The forces which were depriving the aristocracy and nobility of their power (ultimately affecting the monarchy) were the same forces which, following

their logical sequence of development, caused the end of the brief Renaissance they had earlier permitted, a good number of years before the Civil War broke out. Puritanism and the rise of Capitalism quelled the well-spring of the folk-drama and spontaneity of expression exhibited in the Elizabethan era.

The great literary men of the age, in particular Marlowe, Shakespeare and Donne, while typically men of the English Renaissance, reveal in their work the pessimism which was beginning to grip England. Donne in particular, the youngest of them, seems to feel the world slipping from beneath his feet. Science was beginning to shelve out theology, and the new humanistic philosophies put all in doubt. Shakespeare continuously questioned the validity of kingships and cultures. The universe he creates in Hamlet is marvellously displayed in the first scene, physically in a frosty, far-northern night of intense darkness, illuminated only by distant stars; little pieces of transparent burning matter. This corresponds to the intensity and far-northern atmosphere of the play in a metaphorical sense; that intellectual climate of extreme idealism and of absolutism. The star is the extreme metaphor of "either/or"; is the universe invested or is it not? Do the stars make sense or don't they: This is exactly the climate which suits the "To be or not to be" attitude. Perhaps the most central notion of this play is doubt.

The tragic and poetic tension in Shakespeare's work is the tension between two forms of society, two opposed worlds, at the very moment when that tension had reached its height and was about to break open in revolutionary conflict. Shakespeare could not resolve that conflict - only history, life could do that. But he felt and

expressed it in the highest degree and with an incomparable command of language, and he can communicate it to us.¹

Superficially life radiated the Renaissance exuberance and brilliance which have characterized it, but underneath was an intense pessimism. It is also probable that this duality existed because of the lateness of the Renaissance manifestation in England. The outward forms, the ideas and ideals it could accept from Italy and from Europe at large, but what the English Renaissance brought to its manifestation that was specifically its own, uniquely English, was the element of pessimism. This arose from a society economically ahead of Europe, making tremendous advances in the rise of capitalism, but one which was internally insecure and in which nagging fears of its own increasing powers were already felt. Seventeenth-century England had witnessed the Renaissance on the Continent negating itself just as the Late Middle Ages before it had been negated and become something else on the basis of what it was. The values that the late fourteenth-century and fifteenth-century Italian Renaissance had affirmed in its arts and literature were no longer there to affirm in seventeenth-century England, after the termination of the Elizabethan reign in 1603, when latent tensions began to show themselves more openly.

This, then is the milieu in which Shakespeare lived and worked, the background against which he wrote Macbeth.

Verdi's Interest in Shakespeare

Verdi once wrote, "I prefer Shakespeare to all other dramatists, including the Greeks."² From a purely technical

¹A. L. Morton, "Shakespeare's Historical Outlook," The Matter of Britain (London: Lawrence and Wishardt), p. 40.

²Werfel and Stephan, Verdi: The Man in His Letters, p. 175.

point of view it is fairly uncomplicated to deduce reasons as to why, as a dramatist himself, Verdi would be interested in another who is even yet regarded in almost every culture and language group as the greatest dramatist who ever lived and worked. Winton Dean observes that the design of Shakespeare's plays,

while equally repugnant to the old eighteenth-century opera aria and the Wagnerian music-drama, are actively suited to the aria-ensemble plan common to all opera comic or serious, from Mozart to Verdi. The soliloquies give obvious openings for arias.... Shakespeare's technique of developing tension and conflict within the scene, whether between two or more characters, lends itself to the close forms of duet, trio and quartet. Equally prominent are the episodes that call for choral and ensemble treatment, such as the council and battle scenes.... These are not commenting choruses in the manner of Greek tragedy, but incidents that advance and illustrate the action. They are the very stuff of opera.¹

Another of Dean's observations is very pertinent,

Most of Shakespeare's comedy plots came from Italy, stemming from the tradition that ultimately developed through the commedia dell'arte into opera buffa. His clowns in particular, though anglicized, still bear traces of a family resemblance; indeed, his habit of relieving the mood of a tragedy by interspersing a few comic scenes was shared by many Italian composers of serious opera from Monteverdi and Landi to Scarlatti, and became almost universal in the early romantic period. It is no accident that the enormous increase of Shakespeare's operatic popularity dates from just that period when the buffo tradition reached its full development and fertilized the evolving forms of romantic opera.²

If Shakespeare had in fact derived much of his material from Italian sources of a similar style to the art form through which Verdi was working, then it is not at all surprising that Verdi should sense in the Bard's work something in essence and quality of tangibly familiar nature. It is,

¹Winton Dean, "Shakespeare and Opera," Shakespeare in Music: A Collection of Essays, Phyllis Hartnoll, ed., (London: Macmillan, 1966), pp. 93-94.

²Ibid.

nevertheless, insufficiently penetrating of the depth of the connection that would seem to exist between the artists. The question yet remains as to what made it desirable for Verdi, a nineteenth-century Italian to re-work the drama of a late sixteenth-early seventeenth-century Englishman, for his Risorgimentale contemporaries. What was there in the manner in which the Elizabethan handled the content of his works that could be meaningful to Italians undergoing a period of revolutionary upheaval two hundred and fifty years later? This question penetrates beneath the surface issues of literary (or musical) structure and content to the underlying necessity of there being some more fundamental connection between the artists for this interest to exist. The two basic possibilities, which may be independent or interdependent, are biographical and social in nature.

Biographical comparison highlights a number of interesting similarities between the artists, and it is possible that a point of similarity between them which is unique to them could be a significant key in identifying a reason why Verdi found Shakespeare useful. Some of these similarities include a country upbringing from which they never divorced themselves even after years in a large city where they pursued their professional careers, their hard work to establish themselves against competition from various quarters in their career advancement, and their consequential rubbing of shoulders with a tremendous variety of people from all levels of society, which gave them that breadth of experience and understanding of life necessary to creating drama of

vitality and meaning. This wide social interest manifested itself in their works in similar manner. Even a cursory reading of Shakespeare's plays reveals his penetrating, critical awareness of what was going on around him, in the innumerable references and/or allusions to contemporary events, politically and in the broadest social spectrum, which unquestionably roots these works to the Elizabethan era, regardless of their more universal significance. The connections of Verdi's Risorgimento-period works to their time has already been discussed in the previous chapter.

Taking an issue of utmost importance such as the artists' attitudes towards politics, produces a comparison of rather neutral value; they are neither markedly unanimous in their revealed opinions of the role of kingship and power, or of the nature of social order (although both advocate political solidarity) nor are they significantly diverse in those opinions. If known, their views as to how political stability should be secured, may be found to differ. It is clear, however, that neither Shakespeare nor Verdi was wholly committed to one particular social class; their publics consisted of almost all levels of society. Their appeal was widespread, although Verdi was, of course, committed to the nationalistic cause and the relief of repression for the popular voice which wielded almost no power in his Macbeth period.

The essential ambiguity surrounding Shakespeare's political views¹ is evidenced by the diversity of opinions

¹Muir, "Shakespeare and Politics," Shakespeare in a Changing World, p. 66 ff.

his critics present, which at times leaves the disquieting impression that in the face of ambiguity they sometimes read into Shakespeare what they wish to see. Furthermore, as the previous chapter shows, Verdi's political ideas changed rather substantially through his lifetime. Were more known about Shakespeare's, it is not improbable that he underwent the same process.

Upon this basis (and having not even considered the dissimilarities), there would appear to be nothing biographical which is uniquely similar and which in turn would conclusively establish Verdi's relationship to Shakespeare. The same comparisons could probably be drawn in similar manner between many other artists whose work is based on diametrically opposed premises, or whose work propounds entirely different values. This of course does not invalidate the worth of non-unique connections between the artists. What it does establish is that non-unique connections are not sufficient as a total explanation of the relationship. Perhaps the correlation of the artists' ideas in terms of conceptual compatibility lies in there being little of essential nature in the philosophies which pervade Shakespeare's work that Verdi found unacceptable, rather than in there being total confluence.

If little of note was achieved by comparing the artists biographically, it would seem that there would be less possibility of discovering anything worthwhile in comparing Elizabethan England with nineteenth-century Italy. Historical (in a time sense) and geographical differences, never mind social or cultural issues, should mitigate against it. Nevertheless, a very interesting factor presents itself.

Economically both societies had been primarily agrarian immediately prior to the respective epochs under discussion, and they still were to a large extent. However, both were undergoing a process of transition and were becoming orientated towards a capitalistic system of free enterprise. Some concentrated areas in the northern part of Italy had already become industrialized to a fairly advanced level by the mid-nineteenth century, but because of the political fragmentation of the peninsula and the nature of capitalistic enterprise, this developing wealth and technology did not benefit Italians as a cultural whole, or substantially affect conditions in other parts of the peninsula. In Elizabethan England too, traditional forms of agriculture and trade co-existed with developing modes of capitalistic enterprise. The trade market mushroomed, radically affecting the use and development of its intrinsic elements, land, labour, money, and commodities produced for that market. All of this had the effect of rapidly dissolving the traditional economy which had revolved around the now-weak feudal lords.

It is fascinating that in certain respects the transition from agrarianism to capitalist enterprise in Elizabethan England was more advanced and complete than it was in Italy more than two hundred years later. Already the English had established a vast foreign market network which the Italians never managed to duplicate, but which they only began to emulate in the late nineteenth century after Cavour had brought about political stability, and consequently favourable conditions for economic growth. Clearly the reason for the English precocity was the

political unity which Elizabeth achieved, even though volatile tensions were developing disquietingly beneath the "smooth-fac'd peace" of her leadership. She is a pertinent witness to Marx's dictum, "Absolute monarchy presents itself as a civilizing centre, as the initiator of social unity."¹ During Marx's lifetime one element of the Risorgimento leadership strove to achieve this for a united Italy. It is probable that the disintegration of central control in the peninsula centuries previously is a major factor in explaining Italy's backwardness.

Equally fascinating is the realization that what was happening in nineteenth-century Italy was part of the same bourgeois democratic revolution which had occupied Europe from the Renaissance onwards, and of which Elizabethan England was a very advanced and integral part, especially from an economic point of view. Kettle comments,

The first great cultural expressions of the bourgeois revolution in Europe were the painting and architecture of the Italian renaissance and the literature of Elizabethan England.

Elizabethan literature reaches its height before the English commercial bourgeoisie achieves political power.²

Similarly the greatest cultural manifestations of the Risorgimento, the literature of Leopardi and Manzoni and the earlier style of Verdi's music, were all expressed before the decisive changes were brought about in the

¹Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Revolution in Spain, p. 25 in Weimann, "The Soule of the Age," Shakespeare in a Changing World, Kettle, ed., p. 23.

²Arnold Kettle, "The Progressive Tradition in Bourgeois Culture," Radical Perspectives in the Arts, Lee Baxandel, ed., (Baltimore: Penguin, 1972), p. 162.

peninsula. The process of social transition germinates a condition of flux which has certain ramifications for the artist. Particular things occur so that concomitant factors are set free to result in a particular and appropriate mode of expression. From historical example it seems that in a time of transition, of change and crisis, men's heightened consciousness of themselves and of one another, generated by social or socio-political-economic instability, finds a natural outlet in theatre, whether opera or drama, the most social of all arts. For example, of the Elizabethan theatre Weimann says,

Its most distinctive qualities may be seen to result from the survival of traditional popular attitudes to art at a time when these attitudes could be newly vitalized and enriched under conditions superior to those of traditional medieval society. For one short season in English history the springs of folk-drama and the peoples' enthusiasm for the arts of acting were not yet smothered by puritanism and the rise of capitalism; while broad sections of the population were still capable of enjoying first-rate drama, they were - as never before in modern history - already in a position, economic and social, to support a large-scale theatrical organization. The very conditions which made possible the modern theatre, with its professional and financial apparatus, had not yet transformed the mind of its audience. Capitalism, not having as yet gained a decisive hold over the consciousness of the majority of the people, provided - in the centre of the country - the necessary material conditions much superior to those of the seasonal and amateur stage of the Middle Ages. A time-honoured tradition and a deep-seated demand of the popular imagination could now be developed in an entirely new direction; it could be met by a theatre which, while not essentially dependent on aristocratic patronage, was - despite formal pressure - free from the immediate control of the leading London bourgeoisie.¹

Although Italian opera did not enjoy only a brief flowering, the style of Verdi's Risorgimentale operas was short-lived and pertinent to its time. Weimann's comments concerning

¹Weimann, "The Soule of the Age," Shakespeare in a Changing World, Kettle, ed., pp. 26-27.

the effect of the development of capitalism on the theatre are otherwise largely appropriate to the forties operas in Risorgimento Italy as well. Weimann proceeds to discuss the widely-ranging objective viewpoint of the sensitive transitional-period artist.

It was in truth a theatre 'individable' with a poetry 'unlimited' in its social and aesthetic appeal; for it embraced many of the popular, humanist and some of the courtly elements, together with their theatrical equivalents such as rhetoric, allegory, singing, dancing.... But by fusing these elements in the light of a unifying and exalting experience of nationhood, the Elizabethan theatre brought forth something new which nevertheless appealed to all sections of its audience.... It was a multiple unity based on contradictions and as such allowed the dramatist a flexible frame of reference which was more complex and more vital to the experience of living and feeling within the social organism than the achievement of any other theatre before or since.¹

Again these principles are for the most part borne out in a similar manner in the structure of Verdi's work, as was discussed in Chapter One. It is reasonable to draw a relationship between what Weimann defines as Shakespeare's "fusion" and the somewhat problematical contradiction of Verdi's pouring of a new content into an old form, as was dealt with in that chapter. The manner in which Verdi and Shakespeare expressed the specific tensions derived from their respective transitional societies in their work is by no means identical, but the fundamental connection between Verdi and Shakespeare, although not necessarily unique, is that they were both generated by the conditions incumbent upon societies in the state of flux which is part of transition, and more than that, it was part of the

¹Ibid., p. 37.

same historical, revolutionary movement. Shakespeare and his England were involved in the earlier stages, while Verdi and the Risorgimento saw the process reach its conclusion. This process spanned several centuries and left no area of existence untouched; there were political, economic, social, philosophical, religious and artistic ramifications.

Summary

As economic developments are chiefly responsible for determining the structure of society, and society in turn moulds the individual man, so both Verdi and Shakespeare were products of epochs of transition. As artists they understood and expressed the very core issues of their respective transitional eras in terminology meaningful to their fellow men. They were neither entirely of the old order which was passing, nor of the new which was being established; neither in total sympathy with the feudal lords, the improving bourgeoisie, nor for that matter, entirely uncritical of the peasantry. Even though separated by two and a half centuries and significant geographical and linguistic differences, both functioned within the broad context of the European bourgeois democratic revolution and they made a contribution of untold significance to its history.

PART II

VERDI'S MACBETH

CHAPTER III

PRELIMINARY NOTES

What Verdi's Purpose in Using Shakespeare Was Not

It is of the utmost importance to stress at the outset of the section that within this context a puritanical view of Shakespeare cannot be tolerated, for it would not allow any true meaning of the relationship between the play and the opera to emerge and to be assessed objectively. The purist takes as his point of departure a comparison from a poetical standpoint, which will obviously elevate the play to the detriment of the opera in every instance, as no libretto can be an independent literary masterpiece of the order of straight drama and simultaneously meet all the demands of musical form. Each genre has its own trappings which necessitate a certain degree of exclusiveness.

The plays are created by a counterpoint of words, whose arrangement in poetry or prose is responsible for their impact on an audience. Opera, while employing words, speaks principally through the music. To separate the skeleton of the plot from the flesh of the language is to pull apart a living organism; but it may prove a less damaging operation for a composer than to pit his strength against Shakespeare's own words. Great poetry, which already has its intricate rhythms and overtones, is far harder to set to music than plain pedestrian verse. It can be done, as Britten has shown, but only by a composer who is not afraid to impose his own personality on the text.¹

The elevation of the play is most often the purist's intention, whether he recognizes it or not.

While it is legitimate to ascertain how closely an opera resembles the play on which it is based, Dean correctly says,

¹Winton Dean, "Shakespeare and Opera," Shakespeare in Music: A collection of Essays, Hartnoll, ed., pp. 94-95.

An opera needs to be considered as an entertainment in its own right, quite apart from its relationship to any literary original. There is no a priori reason why Shakespeare should not have inspired popular and enjoyable operas whose artistic content cannot bear comparison with the plays.¹

To derive any value from this research it is essential to assume an open-minded attitude. Expressed colloquially it might be, "Giuseppe, I give you permission to do whatever you want to with Shakespeare, and I will not impose general puritanical judgments on you. In other words, I am not going to assume that your purpose was to mirror Shakespeare and then come down hard on you because you didn't shape-up in every detail. On the other hand, I am interested in seeing just what you did with the Bard, with the possibility of finding out why you did it."²

In this regard, the all-too-prevalent type of attitude which progressive musicology must dissociate from completely is represented by such articles as "Shakespeare, Boito and Verdi" by Roy E. Aycock.³ His unwritten, but clearly implied premise is that by not being able to follow Shakespeare in every detail (according to this school of thought he obviously would have wanted to), Verdi served the poet badly. The concomitant idea implied is that the more deviation there is from the literary source, the worse the opera must

¹Dean, "Shakespeare and Opera," Shakespeare in Music, p. 89.

²Specific value judgements relating to Verdi's use of Shakespeare will be inevitable and appropriate in so far as they are not part of an over-all condemnatory process.

³Roy E. Aycock, "Shakespeare, Boito and Verdi," Musical Quarterly 58:4 (October 1972): 592.

be per se. Hence Aycock speaks of the "reprehensible... reshaping of the characters of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth and of the relationship between the two."¹ The reason he produces for labelling them "reprehensible" would stand ground only if the aim of the operatic borrowing was exclusively to mirror. Speaking of the Verdi Macbeth he says,

Gone is Shakespeare's hesitating, uncertain, conscience-stricken Macbeth, gone is the Macbeth whose nature is too full 'o the milk of human kindness to catch the nearest way'... Through the process of that inexplicable alchemy called poetry, Shakespeare's Macbeth and Lady Macbeth both manage to emerge as sympathetic characters.²

So far, the factual assessment is accurate, although within its context the tone betrays the sense of loss that these qualities (or otherwise) are absent. But Aycock continues, "Not even the power of Verdi's music is able to achieve a verdict for the co-protagonists of the opera."³ The choice of words alone in this one example pin-points a fundamentally puritanical stance. This is ultimately a piece of simplistically unmusicological trivia not worth fussing over, but it is disturbing precisely because it is indicative of a whole way of thinking about opera, and particularly those operas set to libretti derived from literary works of some fame. For that reason it is worth mentioning by way of caution.

Even by the time of Macbeth, Verdi's success and public acceptance was such that aside from keeping a wary eye on the censors, there was little need for concern of public pressure that would mitigate against his composing

¹Ibid., p. 591. ²Ibid., p. 592. ³Ibid.

whatever he wished to. He was not an amateur hacking up the work of dramatists in order to piece together a tentative success whose composition was determined predominantly by projected audience receptivity. Unless proved otherwise through primary sources not yet brought to light, it cannot be assumed that Verdi attempted to mirror Shakespeare. More logically, he took Macbeth knowing what he wanted from Shakespeare, and transformed it to suit his own purposes. If Verdi's aim had been to mirror Shakespeare, by the time of the creation of his thoroughly brilliant Falstaff, the final work of the composer's distinguished career when he was certainly master of his material and purpose, blessed with the services of his outstanding librettist Boito, it seems logical that to the greatest possible degree he would have achieved it. But the even more drastic pruning, chopping and interpolation of material from Shakespeare's Henry IV into the libretto which was primarily based on that dramatist's The Merry Wives of Windsor must certainly conclude any argument about what Verdi was not doing in using Shakespeare.

It does not matter if the libretto of Macbeth is drastically inferior as a poetic work in relation to the play, and inferior to Otello and Falstaff as a dramatic operatic work. Even if it is, the manner in which Verdi used Shakespeare is in no way categorically bad, far less necessarily inferior to his use of the Bard in the later two works, though they are without question superior operas.¹

¹A clear distinction must be maintained between evaluating the structural or musical/dramatic excellence of the opera and the way in which the dramatic model is

Macbeth and the manipulation or representation within its context is equally as important as the similar process in Otello and Falstaff to our understanding of Verdi, his place within nineteenth-century opera and the influence of current political events on his thinking.

The above discussion concerning puritanical attitudes towards the relationship between composer and dramatist logically suggests the issue of the operative relationship between librettist and composer, and librettist and dramatist.

Throughout operatic history, the nature of the liaison between composer and librettist has varied vastly, and it would be futile to attempt to generalize an evaluation of influence of one over the other. To take the case of Verdi alone reveals as many different levels of relationship and interaction as librettists he worked with, and even then the relationship between them varied from opera to opera, especially in the cases of Piave and Maffei. In the final analysis, however many arguments took place between composer and librettist, however many stringent alterations and revisions were made, the composer accepted the libretto, and thus it seems logical to assume that to a large degree what remains is what he wanted; it is his selection from the original drama. Verdi virtually tyrannized his librettists, and Piave in particular, the main librettist for Macbeth, led a very harrassed life.

served. A dramatically excellent opera may serve its model very poorly, while a mediocre opera may have done justice to its literary model. The emphasis is that a predetermined value judgment on this issue is inappropriate.

...over and over again, written in insulting capitals, come the words 'POCHE PAROLE...POCHE PAROLE...STILE CONCISO' and so forth....

Piave did everything he was told; but meanwhile he had heard from Lanari that no dancing was allowed on stage during Lent so that the ballet of aerial spirits would have to be dropped. Verdi was unmoved. He wanted a ballet with chorus at that point (i.e., after the apparition of the eight kings) and he would have one. Would Piave therefore please write the words and not keep making ridiculous objections....¹

In short, Piave was given no peace.... The libretto completed, Verdi turned on his collaborator with savage fury. 'Of course you're not the slightest bit in the wrong except for having neglected those last two acts in an incredible way. Ah, well! Sant Andrea [a nickname for Maffei] has come to my rescue and yours - and more especially to mine, since to be frank I couldn't have set your verses to music....'²

More than that, Verdi wrote to Tito Riccordi concerning Macbeth in 1855,

It was ten years ago that I conceived the idea of composing Macbeth. I did the sketch for the libretto myself. More than that, I wrote out the whole drama in prose, with the division into acts and scenes, indicating the vocal numbers on so on. Then I gave it to Piave to put into verse. Since I had reservations about what Piave wrote, I asked Maffei, with Piave's permission, to go over it, and particularly to rewrite the chorus of the witches in the third act and the sleep-walking scene.³

The relationship between librettist and dramatist is a much more widely-disputed subject, and involves the complicated issue of dramatic condensation. The difficulties the librettist faces in adapting a drama to his/the composer's purposes are manifold, for the drama has its own set of limitations, its own theatrical milieu, much of which is

¹See letter to Piave, 22.9.1846. Franco Abbiati, Giuseppe Verdi (Milan, 1959), vol. I, p. 643.

²Budden, The Complete Operas of Verdi, vol. I, p. 270.

³Werfel and Stefan, Verdi: The Man in His Letters, p. 198.

not suitable for use in a libretto to be set to music, or even possible to include were it desired. As Dean comments, even a setting of the play as it stands is bound to alter its values,¹ and a slight alteration of content may, to a greater or lesser degree, depending on each individual work, entirely dislocate the framework of the play. If the framework itself is manipulated, the ramifications are greater. Dramatic alteration/condensation is an inevitability, and again, only warped perception will eventuate from practices of puritanical judgement.

Nevertheless, Shakespeare, whose dramas are for the most part so structurally sound, tightly knit and complete within themselves, often presents greater difficulties to the librettist striving to construct a libretto of similar qualities, while yet catering to opera's own limiting and liberating conventions,² than the works of many others do. There is no denying that Boito managed far better with Otello and Falstaff than Piave and Maffei did with Macbeth. The ultimate test for a libretto, however, is not how closely it adheres to the dramatic original, but how workable it is as a dramatic tool for musical articulation. From this point of view Verdi's Macbeth libretto is just as interesting as the superior libretti Boito wrote for him.

In the light of critical argument concerning what

¹Dean, "Shakespeare and Opera," Shakespeare in Music, p. 92.

²Joseph Kerman, Opera as Drama (New York: Vintage Books, 1956), pp. 6-7.

is unadulterated Shakespeare and what is spurious¹ in Shakespeare's Macbeth, there is even less substance to puritanical dogma as a standard of judgment. It is doubtful that scholars will ever pin-point where (if at all) Middleton was interpolated by later playwrights or directors. Granville-Barker postulates² that in any event it is hardly likely that Shakespeare opened Macbeth with the witches, and feels that Hecate may be ruled out without a second thought. So, to cite but one example, Pavarotti/Verdi, by omitting much of the witches' opening gambit, may in fact be closer to the Shakespearean original than they or we realize.

Apart from the dramatic considerations discussed previously, Verdi's handling of the Shakespearean material in creating his Macbeth would seem to suggest that three levels of operation were brought into play, balanced against each other and closely interconnected. Firstly, certain operatic conventions had to be observed; the general style of the primo ottocento had to be accommodated. On the other hand, the use of Shakespeare necessitated specific deviations from/adaptions of the period's (and Verdi's) prevailing style. Thirdly, it would seem that Verdi's selection and use of material often resulted from his close affinity with the Risorgimento.

¹See Introduction to Shakespeare, Macbeth, edited by Kenneth Muir, The Arden Shakespeare, Harold Brooks and Harold Jenkins, general editors, 9th ed. (London: Methuen, 1962), pp. xxii-xxxiii.

²Harley Granville-Barker, Prefaces to Shakespeare, Vol. 4, Macbeth (London: B. T. Batsford Ltd., 1974), p. 60.

It is improbable that the composer was fully aware of the intricate interplay between all levels at all times, and no objective assessment can be defined. For instance, it is possible that Verdi was extremely aware of the inter-relationship of his particular selection of Shakespearean material with the demands of primo ottocento form at many points, yet unaware of the ultimate significance of that dual-level selection in terms of specific meaning for the Risorgimento.

If operatic structure, form, plot and character could be neatly dissociated from each other, and the three-level process outlined above applied to each independently, discussion would be straightforward. But the elements are inextricably interdependent at many points, and as this three-level process consequently appears to operate both within each element individually and between them collectively in varying degrees, a neatly-boxed discussion is virtually impossible. A certain amount of back-reference is unavoidable.

No comprehensive discussion of the differences between the 1847 and 1865 versions of Macbeth is deemed necessary within the present context, and specific details will be mentioned independently where relevant.

While it is impossible to maintain a rigidly clear-cut terminological distinction between elements, in general within this context structure refers to the design of the work as a whole. Form applies to the individual entities within the whole, and most specifically to musical forms, such as cabaletta, cavatina, brindisi. Plot is obviously concerned with the organization and development of the story.

Play and Opera

If the dramatic development of the plots of Verdi's and Shakespeare's Macbeths undivided into acts is compared, aside from the fairly extensive condensation on Verdi's part, and his interpolation of ballet music and crowd choruses, the alteration is not notably extensive. However, when the breakdown into acts is considered, the comparison takes on a great deal more significance; there is a notable dramatic shift.

Verdi's first major alteration was to reduce the number of acts from five to four. According to primo ottocento tradition the average opera contained three acts, often two, sometimes four, but never five. Particularly in this period of Verdi's career, he seldom stepped far outside of his inherited musical tradition, and it is therefore quite logical that he should have condensed Shakespeare's structure in this way.

The common three-act opera was structured in such a way that the main action was centered in the first and last acts, with the second functioning as a "relief" between the two. The crowd scenes and large ensembles tended to be more predominant in the outside acts, while the inner was concerned more with solo work for the principals, logically bearing out the tendency towards reflection and dramatic relief. If a fourth or fifth act was added, the structure is obviously not as clear. If there were only two acts, the prototype structure is correspondingly simpler. The finale to Act I is usually the secondary climax to the opera,¹ incorporation a large crowd chorus.

¹Sometimes Act I or II had a more grand finale than

See Diagram One.¹ (Macbeth compared with generalized primo ottocento opera).

The relationship of Macbeth to the pattern is relatively clear, although the pattern is not a blueprint in any sense. Most of the other Risorgimento operas, especially I Due Foscari, Il Corsaro and Alzira fit the pattern much better than Macbeth does. For the present purpose of comparison, the pattern is more clearly distinguished if Act III, which belongs almost exclusively to the witches and apparitions (i.e. to the world of ritual, containing more of musical and operatic significance than contributing to the dramatic development) and to which the ballet for Paris in 1865 was added, is considered as a continued "relief" section. Hence

GRAND-SCALE DRAMA I	-	DRAMATIC RELIEF II	-	GRAND-SCALE DRAMA IV
			(III)	

Shakespeare's drama is a steady building-up of all the various levels within the matrix of the plot, interacting in multifarious complex ways towards the last scene, where Macduff can finally proclaim,

"The time is free." V. ix. 21

The development and progress of evil in the play operates as a kind of snowball effect - once begun, there is no relenting until it has wrought its worst havoc, and in its severe impact has ultimately set in motion the contradictory means for its own termination. The simultaneous interaction of the Shakespearean structural requirements with the demands of the musical form and primo ottocento style precluded both the

the final act. Budden, The Complete Operas of Verdi, vol. I, p. 10.

¹ See p. 164.

exact representation of the Shakespearean dramatic progression and a clear definition of the

GRAND-SCALE
DRAMA

-

DRAMATIC
RELIEF

-

GRAND-SCALE
DRAMA

structure of the opera, but resulted in an adaptation of both.

Summary of Structural Alteration
(See also Diagram Two)¹

Plot-wise play and opera effectively begin in the same place, with the witches on the blasted heath, and the subsequent entrance of Macbeth and Banquo who ^{happen} upon the witches in the midst of their incantations. In the most drastic pruning of the work (he omits all of scenes i, ii, iv, vi and vii of the play), Verdi speeds up his dramatic progression so that by the end of his Act I, the murder of Duncan is complete. This compares with up to halfway through Act II scene iii of the play. By implication there seems to be little doubt in the minds of the people as to who the murderer is. Even if as yet the murderer has not been named, and is once labelled as "unknown," there is no investigation necessary in the subsequent scenes to determine who it is. This is a substantial shift in plot from Shakespeare, where Malcolm and Donalbain are at first suspected. At very least, sensing the total betrayal of right and order in society, the people collaborate in a massive crowd chorus to invoke the help of God in their redemption.

Schiudi, inferno, la bocca, ed inghiotti
nel tuo grembo l'intero creato;
sull'ignoto assassino esrato
le tue fiamme discendano, o orror!
O gran Dio, che ne' cuori penetri,
Tu ne assisti, in te solo fidiamo.
Da te lume, consiglio cerchiamo.

¹ See p. 165.

a squarciar delle tenebre, a squarciar il vel.
 O gran Dio, che ne' cuori penetri....¹

Shakespeare's Act I, by contrast, concludes rather unpretentiously with a dialogue between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, while Macbeth is still hesitating over the dastardly deed, pondering, reasoning, as his wife forces him on.

Macb. If we should fail?
 Lady M. We Fail?
 But screw your courage to the sticking-place,
 And we'll not fail.

I. vii. 59-62

Verdi omitted the last half of Act II scene iii, scene iv, and Act III scene i before he picked up the dramatic thread for the commencement of his Act II with Shakespeare's III. ii. This is another dialogue between the two principals, when the play of guilt upon Macbeth's conscience and the necessity for further murder is beginning to manifest itself. Verdi's II. ii, corresponds to III. iii, of the play, with the murder of Banquo in the park, and is subsequently followed by the big banquet scene in Macbeth's castle, as scene iii (II. iv in Shakespeare). Omitting the remaining two scenes of Shakespeare's Act III, Verdi concluded his Act II with another enormous crowd chorus. To accomplish this he had to alter the plot, so that instead of Lady Macbeth dismissing the crowd of guests, they all remain present to witness the full

¹'Open, hell, your mouth, and swallow the whole creation. On the unknown assassin pour your flames. O Great God who penetrates our hearts, help us—in you alone we trust. From you we seek light and aid to rend the veil of darkness. May your impending wrath strike the evil one. O heavenly vindicator! Brand his face with the mark which you have stamped on the first assassin.'

impact of Macbeth's encounters with the ghost (his seeming fit of madness) and the unquestionable manifestation of his guilt. Macduff sings,

Biechi arcani! s'abbandoni questa terra;
orch'ella è retta da una mano maledetta
viver solo il reo in può.¹

while the "Dama" and chorus sing,

Biechi arcani! sgomentato da fantasmi egli
ha parlato!
uno speco di ladroni
questa terra diventò.²

Verdi omitted Act III scene v (almost certainly spurious) as well as scene vi from the opera, commencing his Act III in line with Shakespeare's Act IV. Scene vi was expediently omitted because it again removed Lenox and another Lord without difficulty, and also because the severe irony it contains would have been difficult for Verdi to handle adequately at this stage of his writing. For Act III Verdi used Shakespeare's scene i of Act IV only, which was considerably expanded with the addition of the 1865 ballet.

After the procession of apparitions and kings, and the witches' dance, Verdi brought Lady Macbeth into the Act, departing from Shakespeare. The omission of Act IV scene ii effectively dismissed Lady Macduff, her son and Rosse.

Scene i of the final act of the opera corresponds roughly to Shakespeare's IV. iii, but opens with the third of the work's mass choruses, a group of Scottish refugees at the border between England and Scotland. Others have also noted that Verdi's geography is in error in this scene, as

¹Evil secrets! Everyone abandon this land now that she is ruled by a damned hand!

²Evil secrets! Frightened by ghosts he spoke! This land has become a den of robbers.

there is no scenic change before Malcolm suddenly enters, leading an array of English soldiers at Birman Wood, near Macbeth's castle at Dunsinane, far in the north of Scotland. No serious dramatic consequence results from this discrepancy, however. Although there is no direct correspondence, it is likely that the essence of the refugees' chorus was derived from a speech of Rosse's.

Patria oppressa!
 Patria oppressa! il dolce nome, no,
 di madre aver non puoi,
 or che tutta a'figli tuoi
 sei conversa in un avel.
 D'orfanelli, di piangenti
 chi lo sposo, chi la prole
 al venir del nuovo sole
 s'alza un grido e fere il ciel
 A quel grido il ciel risponde
 quasi voglia impietosito
 propagar per l'infinito,
 patria oppressa, il tuo dolor.

.....
 Patri oppressa! Patria oppressa!
 Patria mia! Oh, patria!¹

Rosse.
 Alas, poor country!
 Almost afraid to know itself. It cannot
 Be call'd our mother, but our grave; where nothing,
 But who knows nothing, is once seen to smile;
 Where sighs, and groans, and shrieks that rent the air
 Are made, not mark'd; where violent sorrow seems
 A modern ecstasy: the dead man's knell
 Is there scarce ask'd for who; and good men's lives
 Expire before the flowers in their caps,
 Dying or ere they sicken.

IV. iii. 164-173

¹ Oppressed homeland! You cannot bear the sweet name of Mother now that to your children you have changed totally into a tomb. The cry of orphans and sorrowing ones, some widowed and some fatherless, rises at the breaking of day and strikes heaven. The sky, overcome with pity, responds to that cry as if it wished to spread your sorrow throughout the universe. Oppressed homeland! My homeland! Oh, homeland!

The sleepwalking scene, Shakespeare's Act V scene i, constitutes Verdi's IV. ii. He omitted Shakespeare's scene ii and drew his final two scenes very broadly from Shakespeare's scenes iii, iv, v, vi and viii. Instead of the final scene ix, in which Macduff proclaims, "The time is free," V. ix. 21 the final crowd chorus of victory concludes the opera in grand primo ottocento splendour.¹

Salgan mie grazie a te, gran Dio vendicator;
a chi ne libero inni cantiam di gloria.²

The Choice of Macbeth

The question of Verdi's interest in Shakespeare in general has been discussed in the previous chapter. Why Verdi specifically selected Macbeth raises further discussion. Ultimately the reason for the timing of Macbeth's appearance was dictated by specific circumstances.

'The maestro is considering three possible subjects,' Muzio wrote, 'Macbeth, Die Räuber, (Schiller) and Die Ahnfrau (Grillparzer).' The last of these was dropped. The choice was between Shakespeare and Schiller, the determining factor being whether or not Lanari could engage a tenor such as Fraschini for the part of Karl Moor. As it turned out he could not; so Verdi turned his attention from a Masnadieri which he had already begun to Macbeth....^{3, 4}

This was obviously not the origin of Verdi's interest in

¹Budden's discussion of Act IV in three scenes is more authentic than as the Act appears in the Schirmer Vocal Score in four scenes.

²May my thanks rise to Thee, great God, vindicator; to him who freed us, let us sing hymns of glory.

³Budden, The Operas of Verdi, vol. I, p. 279.

⁴As it turned out, Verdi completed Masnadieri and saw its premiere in London a few months after the premiere of Macbeth in Florence.

Macbeth, however from a practical point of view Macbeth presented Verdi with a workable plot in terms of primo ottocento expectations and conventions. The dramatis personae could be reduced to a manageable number. Furthermore, as Budden remarks, musically Macbeth called for a vocal combination with which Verdi was already familiar - that of baritone and dramatic soprano.¹ Budden's ensuing statement that Verdi was drawn to the work more decisively because of the complex character of Macbeth is at least questionable. Considering that in fact Verdi divested the characters of much of the complexity with which Shakespeare imbued them,² it is hardly feasible that this should have been of particular attraction to the composer. Certainly Budden is correct in asserting that the fantastic element would have appealed to Verdi for the scenic effects it required, and also that "in 1847 crude volcanic energy was very much in Verdi's province."³

From a more philosophical perspective, an important theme in Shakespeare's Macbeth is the fact that within the context of the play Scotland is sick. The relevance of this theme to Verdi's Italy at the time of the Risorgimento, when certain leaders were attempting to effect a healthy political change in the peninsula, is easy to understand. Italy was sick, and the remedy which would cure Macbeth's Scotland would also cure Verdi's Italy. The remedy was the

¹Budden, The Operas of Verdi, vol. I, p. 279.

²This will be discussed at some length in the following chapter.

³Budden, The Operas of Verdi, vol. I, p. 279.

eradication of evil. This for nineteenth-century Italy was predominantly the throwing off of foreign domination. Shakespeare's play afforded the composer with excellent dramatic symbols of the contrast between Good and Evil, embodied in the dramatis personae. In terms of symbolic content and meaning then, Macbeth was a pregnant choice for Verdi in 1846, when he began developing ideas for it.

CHAPTER IV

ORGANIZATION OF SHAKESPEAREAN MATERIAL AND POSSIBLE SIGNIFICANCE IN TERMS OF THE RISORGIMENTO

Act I

Scene i

Except for the key phrase, "Fair is Foul and Foul is Fair," an initial clue to the perversion of values which is one of the Macbeth themes, Shakespeare's Act I scene i and ii and iv are absent from the libretto. Character-wise this dispenses with the Captain, Donalbain, Angus, Rosse and Lenox, and eliminates the problem of Duncan for the meantime. Few operas could support the full cast of the drama, and despite the essential material which is often thus omitted from the libretto,¹ this is another essential aspect of condensation. On the other hand, opera has the powerful vehicle of music to convey concepts, ideas and atmosphere concisely, which, drama usually requires many lines to create, relatively speaking. Although Verdi actually commences with a non-literal and somewhat scanty use of Shakespeare's Act I scene iii, nevertheless his three-minute Prelude is theoretically capable of capturing and portraying the essence of Shakespeare's seven minutes of scenes i and ii. To a large degree it succeeds.

While rather a strange piece of music if dissociated from its context, the Prelude is, as has been noted elsewhere,² a kaleidoscope of themes from the ensuing drama, which immediately suggests the

¹In many instances, particularly in masterpieces such as Othello and Falstaff, what is omitted from the libretto at certain points is almost entirely embodied in the music.

²Budden, The Operas of Verdi, vol. I, p. 280.

"fantastical" atmosphere (I. ii. 53), and serves as an aural point of reference at recurring instances in the opera. It is a common example of prelude/overture style at that time, in so far as it derives conceptually from various parts of the opera and serves a dramatic function, yet it is superior to many. The "fantastical" atmosphere is captured through the dual medium of overall structure and specific content. Diverse musical fragments are juxtaposed (see the three contrasting sections in example 1) in much the same manner as Shakespeare frequently juxtaposes brief dramatic segments for specific purposes. A cursory glance at virtually any of Shakespeare's plays is sufficient to demonstrate that vivid contrast is a very prevalent Shakespearean structural technique. Even within the smaller divisions, contrasting bars are set one after the other (again, see example 1). In the first structural juxtaposition between segments one and two, even metre and tempo differ. The opening melody in F minor for oboe, B^b clarinet and bassoon in octaves is strange. It commences halfway through the bar, which results in rhythmic ambiguity, and it contains a long trill ending in a turn, with a drop to the dominant, all of which has been preceded by a rather usual interval of a diminished 7th. A sense of foreboding suggested by the strident bass theme (example 1) is peculiarly enforced by the shrill figures of the following bar which, if not here, at least in retrospect denote the witches' devilish chuckling. The last section of the Prelude derives primarily from the sleepwalking scene, and Budden suggests that in the hushed two-part sequential figure for violins, the gnawing in the recesses of Lady Macbeth's mind is intimated.¹ As with most Preludes which

¹ Budden, The Operas of Verdi, vol. I, p. 281.

serve their function adequately, it presents a microcosmic view of various significant elements from the world of the opera.

Verdi drew the Shakespearean material he used in scene i from scene iii of the play; scenes i, ii and iv are omitted entirely. To this he added material for the witches' choruses, giving them relatively much more importance in terms of performance time in the opera, than they received in the play. This increased attention to the witches is one of the curious aspects of the opera. Of the sixteen minutes of the opera which Act I scene i occupies, 9:40 minutes (or approximately 60% of the time) belong to the witches, while in the corresponding four scenes of the play, the witches are on stage only 4:30 of approximately 20 minutes (or approximately 22.5% of the time). That Verdi wished to emphasize the witches is certain, as is corroborated by his comments in the following letter to Escudier.

Be guided by this: there are three roles in this opera and three roles only: Lady Macbeth, Macbeth and the Chorus of the Witches. The witches dominate the drama; everything derives from these creatures, uncouth and garrulous in the first act, sublime and prophetic in the third. They are really one of the characters, and a character of the highest importance....

I repeat that the witches' chorus is of the greatest importance; it is a real character. Never forget, either in the musical execution or in the action, that they must be brutal and uncouth from the beginning up to the moment of the third act when they face Macbeth. From this point on, they are sublime and prophetic.¹

Why he wished to do so is more ambiguous. Several possibilities present themselves as reasons for his expansion of the witches' significance within the opera.

¹Werfel and Stefan, eds., Verdi, The Man in His Letters, p. 142.

Firstly, the dancing and chanting of the witches around the cauldron, along with their inherent "fantastical" nature is an inviting dramatic possibility for an operatic composer to explore, opera being inherently somewhat of a spectacle. Secondly, because the witches by nature present so much dramatic and musical potential, they lend themselves to being moulded to musical form in keeping with demands of primo ottocento style. Thirdly, on a more abstract level, it is possible that Verdi wanted to emphasize the Shakespearean theme of evil.¹ Being generically diabolical, the witches would be an obvious area of concentration. Closely connected to this point is the ⁿfunction and meaning of ritual within a social context.² The witches could easily fit into a ritualistic role because of their diabolical connections and the consequent possibility of developing the theme of evil through this kind of ritual. Of the scene's last witches' chorus (S'allontanarono) Budden comments,

[it] has no parallel in Shakespeare, but it is quite logical enough in terms of operatic construction and quite appropriate dramatically. It is in essence a cry of triumph. The witches have planted their seeds of evil; they have only to wait for the tree to grow and the fruit to appear.... The music is of the same genre as the opening chorus, but here cast in a rapid 'plebeian' 6/8 and featuring a characteristic rhythm which will recall the 'weird sisters' at a later point in the drama. Once again the minor section is superior to the major, which sounds all too like a Neapolitan street song.³

¹G. Wilson-Knight ventures that Macbeth is Shakespeare's most profound and mature vision of evil. See G. Wilson Knight, Wheel of Fire (London: Oxford University Press, 1930), p. 140.

²Ritual comprising practices or recognizable patterns of social behaviour recurring in a loosely-definable manner, reminiscent of religious rites.

³Budden, Operas of Verdi, vol. I, p. 283.

In the choruses Verdi does not sustain the 'fantastical' atmosphere which he created in the Prelude, the commencement of scene i, and in the brief encounter between Macbeth, Banquo and the witches, where each of the three groups in turn (following the triple pattern at the opening of the Prelude) chants Macbeth's fortune (in tono profetico). The first prophesy is in D minor, the second rises to F, and the last climbs to A minor. The two in the minor terminate inconclusively on the minor dominant. In contrast, the prophecies concerning Banquo hardly move at all, melodically. Each commences ambiguously over a diminished seventh and moves into a major chord. Budden suggests that this is an effective means of indicating the contrasting destinies of the two men from the outset.¹ But the seriousness vanishes as the witches do, when their prophecies are concluded with what Budden calls "noisy mock-military flourish"² (see example 2) bars which are exactly in keeping with the style of the chorus. The witches function much more effectively within the context of the ensemble than they do in their choruses. There is no doubt that Verdi not only intended to emphasize the witches (see page 68), but that he also saw them as serious elements of his opera, as the previously cited letter to Escudier (page 68) affirms. It is significant that this letter was written at the time of the 1865 revision. In other words, the witches were not merely a product of his early operatic imagination, characters he would never have created at a later date. He affirmed them in 1865 when he had La Forza

¹Ibid., p. 283.

²Ibid.

del Destino behind him, and was shortly to commence work on Don Carlos. He still spoke of the Act III witches' dances as "infernal."¹ He indicated that the witches must be "brutal and uncouth from the beginning up to the moment of the third act when they face Macbeth. From this point on they must be sublime and prophetic."²

The response of Macbeth and Banquo to the messengers' announcement that Macbeth is Thane of Cawdor in scene i (the first of the witches' prophesies hence fulfilled) verifies this intention, which is further substantiated by the stage directions. Banquo exclaims, "Ah! l'inferno il ver parlo!"³ (fra se, raccapriccio). Macbeth (fra se, sottovoce, quasi con ispavento)⁴ commences the very well-realized duet he shares with Banquo. Stage directions for him throughout the number continue to substantiate his response. He alternates between cupo (gloomy, sepulchral, dejected) and esclamando (breaking out, crying out), which creates a very real impression of the effect of the witches on Macbeth, regardless of the reaction they elicit from the audience. Accepting Budden's assessment⁵ together with

¹Werfel and Stefan, eds., Verdi: The Man in His Letters, p. 234.

²Ibid., p. 239.

³Ah! Hell/the Devil speaks true. (Aside, with terror.)

⁴(Aside, subdued voice/undertone, almost with terror.)

⁵"Le sorelle vagabone has all the deliberate vulgarity of its predecessor without any of the fantasy. It is just any chorus of gipsies or peasants, and no amount of piccolo or trumpet or decoration by violins playing sul ponticello can make it otherwise. Budden, Operas of Verdi, vol. I, p. 283.

Verdi's own statements, it is obvious that he did not achieve fully what he intended with the witches. They are never brutal; to the audience they are uncouth only in an amusing sort of way; ("it is just any chorus of gipsies and peasants....")¹ and they are certainly never prophetic or sublime. It would appear that the witches fail to inject into the opera the full content of evil which Verdi intended for them.

Verdi obviously responded to the possibilities of the use of musical form within the context of primo ottocento structure, but the question of the witches' relationship to the concept of evil is not so easily resolved. It raises the whole issue of Verdi's attitude to religion and the supernatural, and also the meaning of such things as witches to Risorgimentale Italians.

Whatever Shakespeare's own personal views on witchcraft were (and we have no substantial indication of what he thought on the subject), it is certain that his witches were derived from a society which regarded them with a great deal less levity than the average twentieth-century Westerner does. In comparing Shakespeare's "weird sisters" with Middleton's hags, Lamb pronounces the former "serious things" whose "presence cannot co-exist with mirth", while Middleton's hags extract amused smiles.² Terence Hawkes

¹Budden, Operas of Verdi, vol. I, p. 283.

²Shakespeare, Macbeth, ed. Muir, The Arden Shakespeare, introduction p. xxxiii. For a fuller discussion see W. C. Curry, "The Demonic Metaphysics of Macbeth," Twentieth-Century Interpretations of Macbeth, ed. Terence Hawkes (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1977).

postulates that "...in its deliberate defuscation, its ambiguity, its concern to mislead rather than inform, the language of the witches demands that we judge it to be deliberately and fundamentally subversive."¹ Kenneth Muir lists several possible contemporary sources for Shakespeare's shaping of his witches.² One interesting personage was James Stuart of Bothwellmuir who fell from power in 1585 and was killed ten years later.

He became Earl of Arran and was spurred on by the ambition of a wicked wife. The highland oracles' had shown her that 'Gowrie should be ruined', but she helped the prophecy forward as well as she could'.... Stewarts wife was suspected of trafficking with witches and she was described as a 'meete matche for such a spouse, depending upon the response of witches, and enemie of all human societie' (Wardlaw MS., 182). Shakespeare may have been ignorant of these matters but they provide further evidence that the atmosphere of the play was not alien to Shakespeare's contemporaries.³

Whatever Shakespeare's personal opinion of the witches was Muir correctly observes that the belief in witchcraft could be used by him for dramatic purposes at a time when almost everybody supposed that the witches were "channels through which the malignity of evil spirits might be visited upon human beings".⁴

No statement of Verdi's directly concerning witchcraft is known. Concerning Verdi's religious beliefs, Giuseppina Verdi described him as, "I won't say an atheist, but certainly very little of a believer, and that with an

¹Hawkes, ed. Twentieth-Century Interpretations of Macbeth, introduction p. 6.

²Shakespeare, Macbeth, ed. Muir, The Arden Shakespeare, introduction p. xxxvi.

³Ibid. ⁴Ibid., p. lvi.

obstinacy and calm that make one want to beat him."¹ It is doubtful that Verdi celebrated much about witchcraft.

Similarly it seems difficult to pin-point what the response of his contemporaries to witches and witchcraft would have been. Summers indicates that throughout the whole of the eighteenth century belief in witchcraft permeated Italy,² and in the earlier part of this century in areas such as the Romagna Toscana, there were still common superstitions that witchcraft ran in families, the secrets of sorcery being perpetuated by word of mouth from older to younger people. While the Church forbids all such activity within its precincts, certain saints such as St. Antony are even yet regarded as folletti, or goblin saints. In nineteenth-century Italy the general attitude towards "things diabolical" had been greatly influenced by the developing modern secular worldview, which regarded them as incredible nonsense and superstition, but perhaps the influence was not as extensive as in the countries where the Church held less power over the lives of the people than it did in Italy.³ It is also probable that the spectacle of witches would evoke different reactions from the urban dweller than it would from the rather more hide-bound countryman.⁴

¹Walker, The Man Verdi, p. 280.

²Montague Summers, The Geography of Witchcraft (London: Kegan Paul, 1927), p. 571.

³It is somewhat ironic that while the Roman Catholic Church castigates such activities, in some respects it actually propagates similar notions, through the veneration of such supernatural forces as folletti and the belief that they can operate in the affairs of or on behalf of men, and hence to a limited degree directly perpetrates what it condemns.

⁴There are, however, some instances of urban witchcraft

Whatever their response to witches in general would have been, it is hardly likely that Verdi's witches would have been seriously connected with diabolical evil by the audience, because of his somewhat comic treatment of them in the choruses, outlined above. But it would seem that, particularly in the light of the fact that Verdi was still apparently well pleased with his witches even at the time of the 1865 revision, there is a more fundamental reason why they emerge as comic figures when Verdi explicitly intended them to be serious, than merely his acquiescing to the demands and fancies of primo ottocento style. The key to the problem is most logically sought in the intricately related field of ritual.

Following on from the religiously orientated Mediaeval period, through the development of the man-orientated Renaissance, ritual (most fundamentally a religious concept) nevertheless still retained a measure of concrete value within the world that made up the first part of Shakespeare's life, the world of the High English Renaissance. As a commentator and critic of his time, this is reflected in Shakespeare's writings. But Shakespeare's world was a world in transition, and as it changed, so too fundamental values and phenomena such as ritual within that context, changed. The inter-

and satan worship. For example "in 1848 a Satanist chapel was discovered in Rome, where an altar with six black candles had been placed. The Mass of the Devil was celebrated before a congregation of men and women, each one of whom spat and defiled the crucifix, and deposited in a ciborium a consecrated Host either stolen from a church, or purchased. The whole assembly stabbed the Hosts with horrid imprecations, and an orgy followed similar to 'Pagan mysteries and Manichaeian reunions'." Summers, Geography of Witchcraft, p. 573.

related area of kingship, government and state is a common looking-glass through which the operation of ritual is most clearly discerned within society and outside of the directly religious sphere, because from man's early history religion and state were nevertheless almost always interlinked in some manner, and often inextricably so. From such notions arose a doctrine like the Divine Right of Kings.

Henry V is essentially a play about kings and kingship, presenting England as a land ruled by a consecrated authority. Within the relative peace and stability of the confident Elizabethan monarchy under which the play was written, (1599), the ritualism in Henry V functions positively; it is a healthy element within the social structure. But by the time Macbeth was written some seven years later, the ritual concreteness was being displaced; the inauguration of the Jacobean era had resulted in a degree of loss of qualities for which the Elizabethan age had stood, and which Shakespeare as a veritable Elizabethan venerated. In Macbeth the actual concrete base is gone. It is a pro-monarchical play in an era when the grounds for absolute monarchy were completely undermined, an era already engaged in a bourgeois revolution. Almost all of Shakespeare's earlier plays demonstrate that for him monarchy had been a concrete reality; it had a concrete meaning in England. Now it was losing its justification. At various points in Macbeth it appears that there is an attempt at recovering a quality which is lost.¹ In the play Duncan is to a certain degree dependent

¹This sense of lost quality and attempted recovery may be followed through the work of various poets to the writings of Raleigh, as somewhat of a trend.

on the kind of power that Macbeth wields, and to the extent that he is, he exhibits what might be labelled as a passive weakness. But there is an overwhelming sense of the strongly religious justification Shakespeare gives him. This emerges in the manner in which Duncan handles Macbeth in the reception scene (I. iv.), in a wholly gracious speech permeated with terms of growth and abundance; speech which is healthy and strong.

Shakespeare's witches perform within the context of ritual, and they are wholly serious creatures within that context, as has been indicated above. Even so, the quality of ritual is ambiguous to the point where any audience may legitimately question the validity of their function and seriousness. It is a ritual emerging from a concrete base, but now lacking significant content.

Verdi's society was also in a state of transition. It was a diverse society, many elements of which at the height of the Risorgimento were striving to re-affirm a single-minded concept of monarchy. The efforts towards setting up Victor Emmanuel as King of a united Italy may be regarded as a kind of ritual orchestration of admiration for monarchy. Verdi's use of an essentially pro-monarchical play in an era when he was supporting a republican cause is not necessarily contradictory, particularly in the light of his subsequent support of Cavour and the efforts to unite Italy under Victor Emmanuel in the following decade. (Verdi's own name became the symbol of that effort among the Italian population - Vittorio Emmanuel Re D' Italia). It was the moral framework of the drama within the nationalistic context which was of paramount importance; the concept of oppression/

disunity/evil against freedom/unification/good, and the process of eradicating that evil to realize the establishment of just and good leadership for the benefit of the entire Italian society. The means of achieving it was of secondary importance and Verdi changed his views. See page 23).

Ultimately the gambol for a true monarchy did not pay off. It was an impossibility. Victor Emmanuel was essentially a figurehead; the age of the Divine Right of Kings belonged to history. To a large degree ritual had lost most of its concreteness. It had become empty, meaningless form. Very generally speaking, in the Romantic Age ritual was not there, as such, operative as a vibrant necessity an integral societal phenomenon; it was a thing created, non-dynamic.

Obviously within a society lacking significant ritualistic content, it would be virtually impossible for an artist to create a vibrantly meaningful context within which it could operate in his works. If there was a hint of ambiguity as to the ritualistic function Shakespeare's witches played, despite their obvious seriousness, it is magnified in Verdi. The witches in his Macbeth emerged as comic because within his society at that particular time Verdi could not give them a serious, honest ritualistic context within which to function. Despite his elevating the role of the witches to one of primary significance in the opera, they remain easily the weakest element of the work, and consequently if it was Verdi's intention to intensify the theme of evil through their diabolically

ritualistic role, his wish remains unrealized.

The fact that we no longer believe in demons and that Shakespeare's audience mostly did, does not diminish the dramatic effect for us; [nor would it for Risorgimentale Italians] for with the fading of belief in the objective existence of devils, they and their operations can yet symbolize the workings of evil in the hearts of men.... The changes in custom and belief do not seriously detract from the universality of the tragedy.¹

Ultimately it is not credibility of our, or any era's beliefs that is called into question, but the dramatic necessity and use of the material by a particular artist within a particular context. Verdi used the witches much more effectively as a musical tool to fulfill the ends of primo ottocento opera than he did as a symbolic tool intensifying a statement of evil.

At the same time, while the evil of the play does not emanate from what might appear to be the most logical source within that context (ie. the witches), it is possible that Verdi presents a heightened sense of evil through another vehicle. Even in the play, the real evil comes most forcefully from Macbeth and Lady Macbeth.²

...the Weird Sisters tempt Macbeth only because they know his ambitious dreams; and that even so their prophesy of the crown does not dictate evil means of achieving it - it is morally neutral. Macbeth himself never thinks of blaming the Weird Sisters for tempting him to the murder of Duncan.³

Aside from the dynamic musical potential which the witches offer, the increased importance Verdi gave to them is not

¹Shakespeare, Macbeth, ed. Muir, The Arden Shakespeare, introduction p. lxiii.

²See later discussion concerning the Macbeths.

³Shakespeare, Macbeth, ed. Muir, The Arden Shakespeare, introduction p. lvi.

readily given a positive explanation. Within the context of the whole, the unintentional comedy of the witches in a sense sets the real source of evil more starkly in relief.

Macbeth and Banquo are introduced in a straightforward, brisk military march by the strings; Verdi effectively saved the winds for the witches' prophecies. After the witches have vanished, the same type of music, but much quicker and lighter, resumes to accompany the entrance of the King's messengers. Although the whole of Verdi's scene i has been extensively pruned in comparison with the corresponding Shakespearian material, and is probably a little too concise, the thread of the plot is maintained by the traitor Thane having already received his due reward on the rack by the time the King sends word that Macbeth has become Thane of Cawdor. Verdi's omission of characters and the subsequent loss of background material which their absence creates, obviously affects the plot. It becomes more jarring in its rapidity of development and less credible in a realistic sense. But a more significant difference that results is the altered perspective on Macbeth's character, even though most of his material from the play is included. What Verdi omits is what other characters in the play think about Macbeth, such as the following passages.

Cap. For brave Macbeth (well he deserves that name),
 Disdaining Fortune, with his brandish'd steel,
 Which smok'd with bloody execution,
 Like valour's minion, carv'd out his passage,
 Till he fac'd the slave;
 Which ne'er shook hands, nor bade farewell to him,
 Till he unseam'd him from the nave to 'th'chops,
 and fix'd his head upon our battlements.

Dun. O valiant cousin! worthy gentleman!

I. ii. 16-24

(Duncan to Macbeth)

O worthiest cousin!

The sin of my ingratitude even now
Was heavy on me. Thou art so far before,
That swiftest wing of recompense is slow
To overtake thee: would thou hadst less deserv'd,
That the proportion both of thanks and payment
Might have been mine! only I have left to say,
More is thy due than more than all can pay.

Macb. The service and the loyalty I owe,
In doing it, pays itself. Your Highness' part
Is to receive our duties: and 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 honour.

Dun. Welcome hither:

I have begun to plant thee, and will labour
To make thee full of growing.

I. iv. 14-29

The opera does not pause long enough at the beginning to show the great warrior Macbeth, fighting for the good of the people, a Macbeth justifiably venerated by the king and subjects alike, who is to all outward appearances a man of great stature with no blot against him. Also absent, on the other hand, is the irony of Macbeth's endowment,

"what he hath lost, noble Macbeth hath won."

I. ii. 69

Macbeth has won a traitor's title.

"That most disloyal traitor
The Thane of Cawdor...."

I. ii. 53-54

Gone from Verdi's version is the rather ambiguous hint that Macbeth was thus subject to fate. It's presence in Shakespeare suggests that to a certain degree Macbeth was thereby destined to become what he did. For this reason, and because of his

opening stance, the Macbeth of the play draws forth a great deal of sympathy from the audience when he begins to go through the mental torture of the implications of the deed he is contemplating. He deliberates.

If ill, why hath it given me earnest of success...?
I. iii. 132

If good, why do I yield to that suggestion....
I. iii. 134

My thought, whose murther yet is but fantastical
Shakes so my single state of man,
That function is smother'd in surmise,
And nothing is, but what is not.

.....
If chance will have me King, why, Chance
May crown me,
Without my stir.

I. iii. 139-144

If it were done when 'tis done,...
It were done quickly: if th' assassination
Could trammel up the consequence, and catch
With his surcease success;

I. vii. 1-4

The opera, on the other hand, presents a Macbeth who hardly hesitates, almost ready to yield, a Macbeth with no positive biography to commend him, and therefore a Macbeth almost thoroughly evil. When the moral struggles of conscience are removed from the fabric of the drama, the action of the evil is left alone, and the loss of the moral dialectic has the consequent result of intensifying the evil. This in turn effectively delimits the range of audience response. That is to say, that while response to the totality of the play is necessarily complex and many-faceted, and likely to vary from person to person, Verdi has decisively determined response by divesting the characters and the plot of extraneous ambiguity, thus making their impression and impact relatively straightforward. The sense of evil within the opera is not

only intensified, but its source is more clearly understood. Concomitantly, the forces or representatives of good and right within the context are also heightened by contrast, and a so-called grey area in between is virtually non-existent. The polarization of good and evil within the opera may be viewed with ample justification as more significant than merely an operatic necessity of omitting considerable verbal introspection. It is a meaningful ideological phenomenon within the context of the Risorgimento. In its most elemental form, and divested of the moral struggles of conscience mentioned above, the play portrays a Scotland which is sick. This sickness is largely due to the corruption of its leadership. It portrays the progress and development of evil within that leadership, and ultimately the counteraction which expunges the evil. In the light of Chapter One, the implications for Risorgimento Italy are clear. The opera investigates the evil without the fear which is such a prominent theme in the play. A less complex Macbeth therefore serves a functional, unambiguous purpose. This might be termed emotional condensation, co-existent with, but not synonymous with dramatic condensation. It is to be expected that Banquo, on the other hand, is a representative of good, and in fact from the outset in the Act I scene i duet, he is unequivocally presented as such.

It has been pointed out¹ that according to primo ottocento style the slot where Macbeth and Banquo interact in their masterly scene i duet would normally have carried

¹Budden, Operas of Verdi, vol. I. p. 283.

a grand cavatina/cabaletta for the principal, but that where Verdi breaks away from his tradition, he does so with powerful certainty of effect. Immediately Verdi juxtaposes Banquo and Macbeth one against the other, but does it with brilliant concision by superimposing their lines one on top of the other. It is at such a moment that opera as a dramatic art holds the trump card. Budden defines it as opera's "ability to present simultaneously the emotional content of two consecutive and contrasted speeches, each delivered as a soliloquy."¹ To twentieth-century ears the lines are not notably dissimilar musically speaking, but even so perhaps a large part of the dramatic irony emerges from that very point; the nature of the witches' prophecies has already hinted at the very different destinies of the two men, and now together they make explicit their diametrically opposed responses to the witches' intimations, in a musically similar manner which is nevertheless subtly different. Macbeth declares that he is already dreaming of blood and horror ("My conscience teeming with fear and sorrow") while Banquo talks of the "demons, the fiends of darkness..." who "lead us on to perdition".

Within the primo ottocento context, however, Verdi actually contrasted the lines more than usual, even though they ultimately meet in the customary parallel sixths and thirds. The rapid change of stage direction in this number has already been mentioned. (page 71). The short musical fragments juxtaposed one against the other at the beginning

¹Ibid., p. 284.

of the duet are once again reminiscent of the Shakespearean dramatic technique mentioned in connection with the Prelude. Throughout the duet the orchestral accompaniment remains very typical of the prevalent primo ottocento style, but yet in its simplicity is effective in sustaining one firm point of rhythmical reference over which the vocal lines lurch in their jarring rhythm, which is totally appropriate to the irony of the situation. It is similarly effective when the messengers from Duncan join the number for the Coda, singing pointedly, "Why did Macbeth hear us coolly? Why is his appearance/mien not serene/calm?"¹ The entire number is to a significant degree more forthright than in Shakespeare. In the play it is Angus and Rosse who are sent to inform Macbeth that he is Thane of Cawdor. He plays a dual role; outwardly he responds in the manner expected of him, while his inner thoughts and torments are expressed in the "asides". There is no hint in the text that Angus and Rosse suspect anything. In those speeches (I. iii and iv)² he is able to be very emotionally moving while formal. Macbeth is not just veneer, nor is he just chaotic, but he reveals a depth of soul. He is to a degree a human possibility in all of us. This is where emotional condensation, mentioned above, comes into play in the opera. Even before the murder, the

¹The Walter Ducloux English version in the Schirmer score takes too much liberty by rendering the lines "A mood of terror, of fright and fury casts on his features a sombre blur!"

²See also II. iii. 60.

other members of the drama are aware of a presence of evil in him. It is hence logical to expect that when the murder is discovered, little investigation as to the source of guilt is necessary.

The messengers enter (allegro risoluto) to plebeian march music, and declare their message from Duncan in the same rhythmically strong, healthy vein. In the coda to the duet however, their tone has radically altered, and they have assumed a lurching, jerky vocal line which corresponds to Macbeth's and Banquo's. The four orchestral bars with which the number closes are strongly recalled by the music following the murder of Banquo. The stage direction is partono tutti lentamente with the orchestral direction morendo, (dying) while the tone of the corresponding passage in the play is exactly the opposite.

Macb. [To Banquo] Think upon what hath chanc'd; and
 at more time,
 The Interim having weigh'd it, let us speak
 Our free hearts each to other.

Ban. Very gladly.

Macb. Till then, enough.—Come, friends. [Exeunt.]

I. iii. 154-158

Summary

In summary then, scene i contains a good deal of both dramatic and emotional condensation from Shakespeare. It effectively makes use of the Shakespearean technique of abrupt contrasts, and in the Macbeth/Banquo duet exploits the dramatic possibilities of the use of rhythm, which is a powerful operatic tool. Scene i exposes the witches, and

Verdi's problem as basically a non-religious Risorgimentale Italian in dealing with them. The scene nevertheless establishes the importance of evil within the operatic context, an evil which emanates from the title role.

Scene ii

Scene ii essentially incorporates Shakespeare's Act I scene v to the conclusion of Act II scene ii, with the omission of scenes vi and vii, and the opening scene of II. i, between Banquo, Fleance and Macbeth. Scene vi is summarized in the banda music which accompanies Duncan as he passes across the stage with all the principal characters and his retinue in attendance.

The effect of Macbeth's missing scene vii soliloquy to the dramatic context has already been discussed in the previous chapter; its absence intensifies his evilness by divesting him of any evidence of moral consciousness. Within this framework the absence of the two scenes is particularly significant because the audience is deprived of responding to Macbeth with the sympathy that Shakespeare's scene vii generally elicits, but more importantly, the natural relationship between Macbeth and Banquo is gone. Macbeth's evil is strengthened because in the opera he never looks for any reason not to kill Duncan. Duncan is to him merely an obstacle between himself and the crown. Following the witches' prophecy that the crown would become his, Macbeth allows his thinking process to become seared; because they have prophesied what will happen, Macbeth feels that the crown is therefore justly his. The moral question of the

means necessary to attaining it is totally out of focus in his mind. In the play Macbeth contemplates the need to "trammel up the consequence" (I. vii. 3). In the opera even this reasoning is gone.

The rest of the scene comprises further discussion between the Macbeths, in which she taunts him to the deed.

Was the hope drunk
Wherein you dress'd yourself? Hath it slept since?
And wakes it now, to look so green and pale
At what it did so freely? From this time
Such I account thy love. Art thou afeared
To be the same in thine own act and valour,
As thou art in desire? Would'st thou have that
Which thou esteem'st the ornament of life,
And live a coward in thine own esteem,
Letting "I dare not" wait upon "I would",
Like the poor cat i' the'adage?¹

I. vii. 35-44

In the play Banquo does not occupy much time on stage, but by the omission of his conversation first with Fleance, then with Macbeth in II. i, as well as Verdi's omission of III. i, he recedes even further into the background in the opera. This complements Verdi's intentions as expressed in the previously-quoted statement, "There are three roles in this opera and three roles only; Lady Macbeth, Macbeth and the Chorus of Witches."² Again, as in Verdi's Act I scene i, these omissions propel the action of the drama forwards at an extremely rapid rate. Duncan has barely passed off the stage when Macbeth sees the dagger, hears the bell, and Duncan is speedily liquidated (to heaven or to hell).

¹Roy Walker, The Time Is Free (London: Andrew Dakers, Ltd.), p. 43.

²Werfel and Stefan, eds., Verdi: The Man in His Letters, p. 238.

Lady Macbeth makes her entrance in the opera equally as effectively as she does in the play, in the letter-reading scene. Although the letter is condensed in the libretto, its essence is not lost, and in fact the sustained E chord in the strings heightens the mysterious effect of the reading. Lady Macbeth reveals an apparent blindness in not comprehending that the murder was not an uncomplicated potentiality merely requiring activation. Concerning this, Walker submits a comment which initially seems reasonable.

The letter he has written and which Lady Macbeth is reading when she enters in scene v is not lacking in portents. "They met me in the day of success" are the first words of it we are allowed to hear. No word of Banquo's presence or the prophecies to him. Macbeth has made his first fatal mistake. He has suppressed the one piece of news that would show the flaw in the plot against Duncan, and deliberately made his wife believe that the prophecy that he shall be not only Cawdor but King hereafter is a secret of which he was sole possessor. Lady Macbeth never knows the full reason why her husband is driven to kill Banquo after the first murder has been successfully committed, why he is compelled thus fatally to over-reach himself. In the very first "day of his success" Macbeth is corrupted by power and his judgment badly damaged.^{1, 2}

But Muir effectively contradicts this suggestion³ by pointing out that the audience is obviously brought in only halfway through the reading of the letter. At very least, contrary to what Walker has said, Macbeth must have explained previously who "they" are (referring to the witches, who he only calls by name more than halfway through the paragraph). The letter would not otherwise make sense to Lady Macbeth,

¹Walker, The Time Is Free, p. 4.

²See also footnote to scene ii (Act III) in play, pp. 80-81. Shakespeare, Macbeth, ed. Muir, The Arden Shakespeare.

³Ibid., pp. 26-27.

even though it would to the audience.

It seems logical enough to assume that aspiring ambition has taken over to the degree of blinding them both to the consequences until they are actually faced with those consequences. In the opera in particular, where Macbeth has only been seen in a power-grasping, negative position, there is no glaring discrepancy manifest in the outworking of his inherent evil, no matter how blind it is. Rather, positively, it is the point in which the single-mindedness of his evil is consummated. Perhaps more surprising from the operatic point of view is Macbeth's lack of resolve which emerges as Lady Macbeth summons the powers of evil to assist her in goading him on.

Dean is apparently the first to be credited with observing the excellent structure with which Shakespeare provided Verdi in this scene. It is a structure which anticipates a cavatina-cabaletta type of aria, so essential to primo ottocento opera.¹ The reading of the letter provides the introduction to the powerful and strident cavatina in which she wills Macbeth on to become King. Macbeth's messenger, who announces Duncan's impending arrival, provides a natural and dramatically effective bridge passage to the charged cabaletta in which the ministri infernali are invoked to wrap the Macbeths in impenetrable darkness while they accomplish the murder of Duncan. This eight-minute scene is a brilliant illustration of the way in which a good composer can simultaneously follow the dramatic model,

¹This section is a blueprint of the Rossinian Gran Scena with the long preceding recitative, and a short interlude between the aria's contrasting sections.

satisfy the demands of the prevailing style and yet create an element of integral dramatic importance to the opera. (The last two factors are not, unfortunately, synonymous.)

The orchestral writing in both cavatina and cabaletta is so typical of the primo ottocento and all early Verdi as to be trite (see examples 3, 4). Within its own context, however, where it underscores Lady Macbeth's powerful melodies (the first grandioso and the second an impassioned invocation a poco a poco crescendo it functions in a dramatically acceptable manner, granted that it is the melody which carries the entire scene. The cavatina follows the common, simple thirty-two bar unit, with the customary opportunity for the singer to display technical agility towards the final cadence. It is also characteristically tonally static, and in a key (D flat) totally unrelated to the cabaletta (E).¹ The cabaletta is extended beyond the usual thirty-two bar unit into one which is more than double the length of the cavatina. It is binary with a small instrumental bridge between the initial statement and its repeat. Lady Macbeth's lurching, uneven lines, full of melodic and dramatic contrast (within seven bars she has three directions, sotto voce, con stancio, con forza) are full testimony to the fact that she is equally as evil as Macbeth. The power of her intention in the cavatina to effect Macbeth's kingship is so forceful that she conveys a feeling of certainty that it will be realized.

The demands of the structure of this aria bear out

¹See appendix concerning key schemes.

what Verdi apparently desired of his Lady throughout the work, as he expressed in a letter to Salvatore Cammarano when he feared that the effect he wanted from her would be lost in Cammarano's performance.

I know you are rehearsing Macbeth, and since it is an opera which interests me more than all my others, you will permit me to say a few words about it. They gave the role of Lady Macbeth to Tadolini, and I am very surprised that she consented to do the part. You know how much I admire Tadolini and she knows it herself; but in our common interest I think we should stop and consider. Tadolini has too great qualities for this role! Perhaps you think that a contradiction!! Tadolini's appearance is good and beautiful, and I would like Lady Macbeth twisted and ugly. Tadolini sings to perfection, and I don't wish Lady Macbeth really to sing at all. Tadolini has a marvelous, brilliant, clear, powerful voice, and for Lady Macbeth I should like a raw, choked, hollow voice. Tadolini's voice has something angelic, Lady Macbeth's voice should have something devilish.^{1, 2}

Verdi's prowess as a melodist is asserted, in this scene where little is contributed to the atmosphere by the structure of tempo and metre, which follows a typical primo ottocento form.

scene ii	Allegro	=	92	C	
	Andantino	=	72	$\frac{6}{8}$	Approximately 8 minutes
	Allegro	=	96	C	
	Allegro maestoso	=	104	C	

This scene parallels a style Shakespeare employed in parts of his Macbeth, which Wilson-Knight describes as "compressed, concentrated and explosive; often jerky, leaping like a mountain torrent."³

¹Werfel and Stefan, eds., Verdi: The Man in His Letters, pp. 145-146.

²One recording of the opera which achieves the effect is the Gardelli production on Decca Records, with Souliotis as Lady Macbeth.

³Wilson-Knight, Wheel of Fire, p. 101.

Verdi injected a hint of the missing scene via conversation between Lady Macbeth and Macbeth into their brief recitative upon Macbeth's arrival, by having him exaggeratedly exclaiming "Intendo, intendo!" (I hear/grasp/understand you) at her questioning his perception of her previous statement, "Mai non ci rechi il sole un tal domani" (Never may sun that morrow see!). They have not had a moment to discuss anything at all, and yet he says, "E se fallisse il colpo?" (And if the blow should fail?) The play leaves their plans much more ambiguous with Macbeth's "We will speak further" (I. v. 71) than the opera does.

The voiceless, but not faceless Duncan makes his brief appearance in the attendance of Banquo, Macduff, Malcolm, the Macbeths and his retinue. In fact, Duncan is a more potent presence in the opera than has been acknowledged by many critics. The music that accompanies his is a $\frac{6}{8}$ march which "has a jaunty impudence to modern ears, the cane-twirling, hat-at-an-angle air of a music-hall comedian."¹ However, Budden's ensuing remark may be questioned. "The fact is that like all banda music its function is purely scenic; it is not meant to be listened to and judged seriously as music."² It is certain that the banda was a fixture of primo ottocento style, and therefore prevailing practice dictated that Verdi should include it. He did so, however, at a place where a march is called for anyway, thus making it dramatically feasible. That the banda is not meant to

¹Budden, Operas of Verdi, vol. I, p. 286.

²Ibid.

be judged seriously as music is perhaps true, but that its function is "purely scenic" is extremely doubtful. Although the banda is not employed elsewhere, Duncan's messengers have exactly the same type of music in their Act I scene i appearance where they announce Macbeth Thane of Cawdor. It seems reasonable to postulate that although intrinsically the music is not to be compared with Verdi's best writing, the style nevertheless has a significant dramatic function in representing the reigning king and his quality of kingship as healthy; there is law and order, and nothing sinister about it.¹ Duncan is part of a comfortable establishment. He is one of Shakespeare's many figures representing the old order about which Shakespeare obviously had a great deal of positive feeling, and which was passing away in Elizabethan England. Verdi was not affirming any aspects of an order which he hoped was passing, but Duncan for him could represent Good; healthiness as opposed to the diseased evil of Macbeth. Duncan's music is correspondingly contrasting to that of the Macbeths or the world of the witches.

After Duncan's murder, the murder of law and order and kingship, the Duncan type of music is never heard again. The effect of its loss may be echoed in the deeply moving pathos of the introduction to the Scottish Refugees Chorus in Act IV scene i, which in many respects resembles the Hebrew Slaves' Chorus from Nabucco.

The following must also be borne in mind,

This is the nearest Verdi comes to establishing him as a character; and the critics who regret that he went no

¹Cf. the witches' music.

further than this take no account of the economics of nineteenth century Italian opera. To have done justice to Shakespeare's warmhearted, over-trusting monarch would have required a cantabile at least. But this would have raised Duncan to the dubious rank of a comprimario or semi-principal of which there were already two (Banquo and Macduff). To have created another, who is eliminated in the first act, would have been bad housekeeping.¹

Shakespeare contrasts Duncan's and Macbeth's kingship.

Dun. This castle hath a pleasant seat;
the air nimbly and sweetly recommends itself
Unto our gentle senses.

Ban. This guest of summer,
The temple-haunting martlet, does approve.
By his loved mansionry, that the heaven's breath
Smells wooingly here: no jutting, frieze,
Buttress, nor coign of vantage, but this bird
Hath made his pendent bed, and procreant cradle:
Where they most breed and haunt, I have observ'd
The air is delicate.

Enter Lady Macbeth.

Dun. See, see! our honour'd hostess.--
The love that follows us sometime is our trouble,
Which still we thank as love.

I. vi. 1-11

Dun. Welcome hither:
I have begun to plant thee, and will labour
To make thee full of growing.--Noble Banquo,
That hast no less deserv'd, nor must be known
No less to have done so, let me infold thee,
And hold thee to my heart.

Ban. There if I grow,
The harvest is your own.

I. iv. 27-33

Macb. Then comes my fit again: I had else been perfect;
Whole as the marble, founded as the rock,
As broad and general as the casing air:

¹ Budden, Operas of Verdi, vol. I, p. 286.

But now, I am cabin'd, cribb'd confin'd, bound in
To saucy doubts and fears.

There the grown serpent lies; the worm, that's fled,
Hath nature that in time will venom breed,
No teeth for th' present.

III. iv. 20-24; 28-30

In contrast to the images of "generation", "growth", "harvest" that are associated with Duncan, and consequently his kingship, and which permeate his speech, Macbeth uses images of "rock", "marble", "casing air". Mack comments that Macbeth's images are supposedly those of an invulnerability that is becoming inhuman, because it would be more than human.¹ Verdi divests Macbeth of that process of increasing inhumanity and finds it sufficient to counterpoint Evil with Good.

As a figure of Good and Right without any evident weakness seen in the opera, Duncan's brief presence by contrast further intensifies the evil of the Macbeths, yet remains within the boundaries of primo ottocento structure.

In the same letter to Cammarano quoted earlier, Verdi continued,

Tell them that the most important numbers of the opera are the duet between Lady Macbeth and her husband and the Sleep Walking scene. If these two numbers are lost, then the opera falls flat. And these two numbers absolutely must not be sung:

They must be acted and declaimed
With very hollow voice,
Veiled: otherwise it will
make no effect.
The orchestra con sordini.²

¹Maynard Mack, Jr., Killing the King: Three Studies in Shakespeare's Tragic Structure (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), p. 143.

²Werfel and Stefan, eds., Verdi: The Man in His Letters, p. 146.

He is re-emphasising his explicit stage direction for the Act I scena and duetto (Number Six) which immediately follows Duncan's march. "Tutto questo duetto devrai esser detto dal cantanti sottovoce, e cupa, ad eccezione d'alcune frasi in cui vi sara marcato da voce spiegata."¹

Verdi fully accomplished his intention to make the number important by composing a musically and dramatically unified entity which contains some of the finest effects in his early work.² The orchestration not only complements the drama carried on in the vocal line, as in Number Four, Scena e Cavatina, but actually enacts it. He created a nervous, sinister atmosphere through combining seven tempo and metre changes with scoring which is quite out of the ordinary at this time of his career, in the dagger speech. The atmosphere is captured immediately in the instrumental introduction, where three bars of *pianissimo* *adagio* break into *forte* *allegro*, with violins and bass rushing upwards in demisemiquaver figures, following a *fortissimo* blast from cor anglais, clarinet, bassoon and horns, with timpani, over sawing violas and celli. (see example 5, bar 5)

Clearly Verdi was at this point very much concerned about giving his Macbeth a declamatory passage worthy of its poetic original. He could introduce his Lady with all the trappings of a full-blown aria; but his baritone must obtrude beyond conventions. It should be remarked that all through his operas Verdi gave his heroines arias, but often experimented with his male parts as Rigoletto, Paolo, Iago and Othello, Falstaff and Ford.

¹All of this duet must be projected in a hushed and veiled/dark voice with the exception of some phrases in which case they will be marked "With full voice".

²For a more detailed musical analysis of the scene see Budden 286-89, and for additional reference, Godefroy pp. 114-117.

Macbeth's dagger speech is his first such monologue, with its own nucleus of dramatic energy as opposed to mere stop-gap recitative.¹

Verdi's orchestration in the ten-bar andante which incorporates the text of

Now o'er the one half-world
Nature seems dead, and wicked dreams abuse
The curtained sleep:"

II. i. 49-51

which reads,

Over one half the world
nature is dead: now the murderer
creeps like a ghost through the dark....

in the opera is particularly noteworthy. The vocal line (misterioso) hardly moves melodically, while the strings underpin it with a short repeated figure (panissimo) capturing the veiled, nervous atmosphere in which the "wicked dreams abuse the curtained sleep". This opens into series of chromatically descending quavers for viola and cello, then for all the strings. The effect is completed in the slowly-crescendoes, counterpointed lines for cor anglais and B flat clarinet, joined by bassoon. Immediately the image shifts to include the witches,

Witchcraft celebrates
Pale Hecate's off'rings:

I. vii. 51-52

who are vigorously recalled in a few isolated bars, from the previous scene.

As has already been noted, Verdi's dramatic technique of juxtaposing short, disparate elements is also common in Shakespeare. In the latter section of the dagger speech

¹Godefroy, The Dramatic Genius of Verdi, vol. II, p. 114.

particularly, where the musical form derives from the multitude of conflicting images which are rushing through Macbeth's mind, the technique is well illustrated.¹

The transition from expanded monologue/recitative to the duet between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth is musically smooth, and marks a significant step forwards in Verdi's development of dramatic realism within primo ottocento structure. It also effects a smooth transition from Shakespeare's Act II scene i to scene ii, making it the one scene it is dramatically.

The Italian critic Massimo Mila rightly draws attention to this as being the most meaningful accompaniment that the composer had devised so far. It is not just a reach-me-down figure, vaguely connoting agitation, such as had served him so often in similar situations. It grows organically out of its thematic context; and it has a natural energy which drives the music like a flywheel, creating precisely the right background for the tense exchanges between husband and wife.²

A significant textual omission occurs here, while Macbeth is off stage committing the murder. Shakespeare's Lady Macbeth becomes very nervous and says,

Alack! I am afraid they have awak'd,
And'tis not done:- the ' attempt and not the deed
Confounds us. - Hark! - I laid their daggers ready;
He could not miss 'em. Had he not resembled
My father as he slept, I had done't.-

II. ii. 9-13

Comparing this with I. vi. 69, where she says,

What cannot you and I perform upon
Th' unguarded Duncan?

it is possible that she intended, perhaps secretly, to do the deed herself. Roy Walker postulates that she meant to

¹See Budden, The Operas of Verdi, vol. I, pp. 286-288.

²Ibid., p. 288.

kill Duncan, and greet her husband with the news when he came in to answer the bell. Macbeth never knows that, for at the last moment she failed.

Macbeth himself is the instrument selected by the powers of darkness; it was he whom the witches were appointed to meet upon the heath. Lady Macbeth is only the accomplice. When she has drugged nature in Macbeth she has served her turn. The access and passage to remorse is unstopped; compunctious visitings of nature return - too late.¹

The opera, on the other hand, presents them in a three-section duet commencing in imitative vocal lines, clinching the nature of their equality in partnership. Because the above Shakespearean lines are omitted, that weakness of Lady Macbeth's is not a possibility within the context of the opera. If anything, she displays exactly the same cold, calculated nerve which goaded Macbeth into action in Shakespeare's Act I scene v. Her vocal lines are equally as strong and assertive as his. Godefroy suggests that the eerie series of semibreve chords to which she enters in the middle of the scene are indicative of her inner self control,² and the effect of her opening unaccompanied recitative which holds to the tonic B flat for the whole first phrase before dropping to the dominant, corroborates this. She is a woman of cold, steely control. The only hint of nervousness she shows in the recitative is that Macbeth might have left Duncan's chamber without striking the fatal blow. Upon the assurance that he has in fact accomplished their purpose,

¹Walker, The Time Is Free, p. 67.

²Godefroy, The Dramatic Genius of Verdi, vol. I, p. 117.

she resumes her control in the duet and derides his expressions of nervousness. Even though he cries, "Ogni rumore mi spaventa!" (Every sound terrifies me) at the knocks on the castle gate, and continues, "Oh questa mano! non potrebbe l'Oceano queste mani a me lavar!" (Oh this hand! The ocean is not able to wash these hands of mine!), it is a voce spiegata, con forza. To lady Macbeth's demand that he return the dagger to the murder chamber and smear blood on Duncan's servants, he merely says, "Io colà? non posso entrar!" (I over there? I cannot enter!) Shakespeare's "I am afraid to think what I have done; Look on't again I dare not" (II. ii. 50) is absent, and there is little sense of his awareness of the moral implications of the murder for him. His guilt is manifest in fear for himself much more than in horror at what he has committed as a violation of morality, of law and order and kingship.

The nervousness is clearly depicted at the end of the duet, where the two parts are cleverly counterpointed. Lady Macbeth is keyed-up from the beginning of this presto section. Although she is still in control, and is in fact very brazenly dismissing Macbeth's fears, there is something slightly unhinged about the total effect of the ornamental quavers leading to an accented minum on the second beat in the descending pattern that lurches along from bar 23 ff. (see example 6) Under her part, Macbeth interjects staccato, three-note melodic fragments containing wide intervals, which all commence on the second beat of the bar with an accent on the third. There is thus a rhythmical disjuncture between the two parts which heightens the effect. The

passage offers a subtle hint at a slightly different reaction from the two Macbeths within the unity of their evil, which is thus excellently put together. It provides a contrast to the imitation which is characteristic of the first half of the duet, and of them in general where their symbolic significance as Evil is the main thrust. Within the context of the duet, the differentiation is a good dramatic stroke to make them slightly more than symbolic, and invest them with a degree of individuality as people. Because they are people then, their evil is ultimately more terrible than it would be if Verdi had divested them of all humanity and portrayed them only as a symbol.

On the other hand, although she still has to cajole Macbeth, and he does express guilt and a nervous fear, the passage is not sufficiently long to detract from his evil in terms of the audience responding sympathetically to his sense of guilt and fear. It is not long enough to give the audience an opportunity to identify with what vestige of humanity remains in him.

From Act II on in the play Lady Macbeth gradually loses control and degenerates as a source of any kind of strength. She becomes the reality of her worst fears. At this point in the opera, however, although she is taunting Macbeth's fears, they are virtually equal in evil, the moral implications of the murder embracing her as completely as they do Macbeth. She does not crack emotionally nearly as soon in the opera as she does in the play. This scene therefore further strengthens the singlemindedness of the Macbeths' evil, and their overall unity as the symbol of

Evil in the opera, beyond the small measure of humanity he credited to them. The Shakespearean structure lends itself to division into a three-section aria of the similar type which Verdi composed here, and which, considering the entire scene, progressively fulfils and transcends the requirements of primo ottocento opera.

Finale

In writing an opera that was intended to have its most immediate appeal to the common man, it is perhaps strange that Verdi left out the character with whom the majority of the audience could identify most easily, Shakespeare's porter of Act II scene iii. The most obvious reason for the omission is of course economy of production and dramatic condensation. It is a small part requiring the hiring of a good actor for one short scene, and as far as the Macbeth story goes, and the development of expunging evil, it is irrelevant. For Shakespeare the scene has significance on at least two levels.

From a purely technical point of view, as Muir¹ among others has noted, time was needed for Macbeth to wash his hands and change his clothes after his and Lady Macbeth's exit between the end of Act II scene ii and his almost immediate re-entry to join Macduff and Lenox in Act II scene iii. By rearranging things, Verdi has avoided this difficulty, which would occur between numbers six and seven. In the first place, the music itself always adds

¹Shakespeare, Macbeth, ed. Muir, The Arden Shakespeare, introduction p. xxiii

a few extra moments to scene changes. Furthermore, Verdi doesn't bring Macbeth back immediately, but has Macduff enter Duncan's chamber without speaking to Macbeth. Meanwhile Banquo, who accompanies Macduff to Dunsinane, is given the essence of Lenox's speech, "The Night has been unruly" (II. iii. 53 ff.), in a largo aria before Macduff's "Orrore! orrore! orrore!", which subsequently summons Macbeth, Lady Macbeth and others on to the stage. For Verdi then, a dramatic bridge passage, or intermittent scene was not a technical necessity.

From another perspective however, Shakespeare was also making a very contemporary political comment for Jacobean England on the subject of equivocation. Concerning this, Rowse comments,

Popular hits were made by the ever-popular dramatist [Shakespeare] at the Jesuit doctrine of equivocation and that one need not tell the truth under examination, merely equivocate. What was an equivocator? One 'that could swear in both scales against either scale, who committed treason enough for God's sake, yet could not equivocate to heaven' II. iii. 9-11.¹

The prominence of the subject was closely connected to the unsuccessful Gunpowder Plot of 1605 (designed to assassinate King James) and the subsequent trials of the conspirators, particularly that of Father Garnet. He was a Jesuit who learned of the plot through his role as Father Confessor, and failing to report it to the authorities, was tried for treason. Shakespearean critics apparently agree that the Porter's speech (III. ii) is a direct reference to this trial. Within the contemporary political context, the

¹Rowse, Shakespeare the Man, pp. 193-194.

subject also had a deeper significance being employed in the play, for Macbeth's regicide similarly involved him in a life of equivocation. One of Macbeth's striking equivocations occurs later in II. ii. immediately after Macduff has discovered the murder.

Had I but died an hour before this chance,
I had liv'd a blessed time; for, from this instant,
There's nothing serious in mortality;
All is but toys: renown, and grace, is dead;
The wine of life is drawn, and the mere lees
Is left this vault to brag of.

II. iii. 89-93

The Audience knows, as Macbeth himself was to know-- though he here intended to deceive--that the words are a precise description of the truth about himself. Macbeth's own equivocation, by an ironical twist, becomes merely an aspect of truth. It is a brilliant counterpart to the equivocation of the fiend that lies like truth: it is the equivocation of the murderer who utters truth like lies. Equivocation therefore links up with one of the main themes of the Porter scene if Father Garnet had never lived.¹

This whole subject of equivocation was totally irrelevant to Verdi. It is doubtful that Verdi delved into Shakespeare's political and historical background far enough to have unearthed information of this nature. If it is true that he did not, it could be an interesting insight into, or comment on what Verdi distilled as important for his fellow Risorgimentale Italians from his dramatic sources, because he left anything to do with equivocation, which was a contemporary concern in early Jacobean England, at the time Macbeth was written, out of the opera.

The audience is given a further brief glimpse of Banquo in his short aria, "Oh qual orrenda notte!", which, as has already been mentioned, derives from Lenox's lines

¹Shakespeare, Macbeth, ed. Muir, The Arden Shakespeare introduction pp. xxv-xxvi.

in II. iii. 53 ff. In Shakespeare Banquo does not appear until line 84, summoned by Macduff's proclamation of horror, but the reason for Verdi's rearrangement is both obvious, and equally effective dramatically.

Banquo's nervous fear, as expressed in his lines about the strange sounds in the night and the trembling of the earth, is excellently captured in the accompanying orchestration. Once again Verdi has achieved an effect worthy of Shakespeare while remaining within the legitimate confines (although at best far over-reaching the expectations) of primo ottocento style. The style of opening of the largo is similarly common in this period, and it is basically the same form as the accompaniments to Lady Macbeth's cavatina and cabaletta earlier in the act. The projection of the nervousness, however, is achieved through the inter-relation of the effects of the hushed, throbbing staccato demisemi-quavers in the upper strings, the slight rhythmical dis-juncture produced by celli, basses and bassoon coming in on the half beat of particularly the second and fourth beats of every bar (see example 7). The use of the minor (C minor) adds to the effect. The audience is given a glimpse, but hardly an insight into Banquo. He is still little more than a symbol of Good. This Banquo does not have the stature to utter

In the great hand of God I stand; and thence
Against the undivulg'd pretence I fight
Of treasonous malice.

II. iii. 128-129

~~By contrast Verdi has well prepared the dynamic interruption~~
from Macduff, which is accompanied by a hammering allegro

aggitato, containing off-beat effects.

At this point the opera undergoes a major shift in emphasis from the play, plot-wise and structurally. It has already been determined that plot-wise the Porter's absence is not crucial. But the fact that the attendants are not immediately charged with the murder in the opera, nor are they in turn mentioned as being murdered by Macbeth for their supposed crime, coupled with the impact of the subsequent crowd chorus immediately afterwards, leaves the deed firmly at the feet of Macbeth from this point onwards. The chorus, a wholly Verdian interpolation, indicates that they all know the murderer is still alive, and despite the one mention of the "unknown assassin", there is no further investigation necessary into the identity of the murderer.

Open, hell, your mouth, and swallow the whole creation.
On the unknown assassin pour your flames.

From this point on the nine parts do not sing identical words. The chorus of sopranos, tenors and basses, which most generally represents the People, continues,

O Great God who penetrates our hearts, help us--
in you alone we trust. From you we seek light and
aid to rend the veil of darkness. May your impending
wrath strike the evil one. O heavenly vindicator!
Brand on his face the mark which you have stamped on the
first assassin. Great God, in you we trust.

In the play Donalbain and Malcolm seem to realize that Macbeth is the culprit (end of II. iii), although no

direct allegations are made. Banquo of course is not ignorant, but similarly keeps quiet. In the following scene Macduff, in answer to Rosse's question, says that the servants were "suborn'd", (instigated to commit evil action) and continues almost regretfully,

Malcolm and Donalbain, the King's two sons,
Are stol'n away and fled; which puts upon them
Suspicion of the deed.

II. iv. 25-26

Nevertheless, the immediate fragmenting of the social unity or stability which occurs in the play as soon as Duncan has been killed prevents any collaborative expression of knowledge of guilt, or any concerted action until after the open manifestation of Macbeth's behaviour at the banquet scene in Act III. At the end of Act II the people are seen in small groups; Malcolm and Donalbain, Rosse, an Old Man and Macduff. Previous to that the entire focus of attention is concentrated into Macbeth's "Had I but died an hour before this chance" speech (II. ii. 89 ff.). It is a piece of eloquence terrifying in its calculated completeness and objectivity, which is so dissonant with the chaos of the hour. Shakespeare's Macbeth has mastered his dual role. At this point he is the murderer who portrays himself as an eloquent, shocked, yet well controlled host.

In the opera, however, he and Lady Macbeth both arrive on stage simultaneously, singing in unison (significant from the point of view of confirming the unity of their evil). They then blend their voices in the tremendous hymn of the common people, becoming a part of the powerful rhythmical and melodic unison with which that chorus commences.

Verdi adds a further element of horror to the Macbeths in doing this, as it is almost bizzare that either of them can stand and sing the words they do, calling down damnation on the murderer regardless of the fact that the source of the crime seems evident to all. The moral dissonance thus created is perhaps the greatest stroke of dramatic irony Verdi achieved in the opera. There is no hint of Lady Macbeth fainting and being carried out here. Hers is one of the most prominent voices invoking the help of God in protecting and saving Scotland. Obviously it would not have been feasible to faint away the prima donna from the Act I finale in any nineteenth-century Italian opera, but more than that, dramatically the surge of terrible strength she gets in Verdi fits his whole characterization of her.

In contrast to the social fragmentation of the play at this point, the compass of the opera is enlarged to include the entire cast (except the witches, for obvious reasons). Writing to Alessandro Lanari, Verdi said,

When you receive the music you will see that there are two choruses of the greatest importance: don't try to economize on the size of the chorus and you won't regret it.¹

The choruses referred to are this one and the Refugees' Chorus at the beginning of Act IV. At both points Verdi has altered the Shakespearean structure. Here in Act I instead of social fragmentation, the opera assumes immense proportions which are maintained right through to the climax of the chorus in the two powerful phrases, "Gran Dio!" which

¹Osborne, ed., Letter of Giuseppe Verdi, p. 41.

are surrounded by bars of silence expect for echoed A flats in brass and timpani, before the final affirmative statement, "In te fidiam" (In you we trust). At times there are as many as thirteen vocal parts (some of which are doubling) and on top of that nearly all parts are doubled in the orchestra.

Aside from the sheer proportional differences between play and opera, in Verdi the orchestra and voices are in rhythmical unison at the beginning of the adagio, which registers a different horror and fear from that expressed in the furtive and hushed discussions of the play. The finale accentuates beyond a shadow of a doubt the fact that Verdi's Macbeth is not in any way an individual drama, as in some senses Shakespeare's is, and as other of Verdi's works such as Alzira are. Macbeth is entirely a social drama in which the interest centres around the interaction of groups, chiefly groups representing the symbols of Good and Evil. Here the Crowd as an "actor" is assembled in full force to make its first momentous impact. At this juncture Verdi's statement about there being "three roles in this opera and three roles only: Lady Macbeth, Macbeth and the Chorus of the Witches",¹ may be questioned. From here onwards the Crowd functions as a definite role in its own right, as the polarity to the Macbeths, and able in its key moments to embrace the comprimario roles such as Banquo and Macduff, which are also representative of Good.

Speaking of the Act I Chorus Godfroy^e says,

In mid-nineteenth-century operatic music this long passage holds a leading place. Dramatically, however,

¹Werfel and Stefan, eds., Verdi: The Man in His Letters, p. 238.

it does not bear very close examination. Verdi had worked at white heat throughout the suspense up to the climax. Now he sits back and lets the act run down-hill in a welter of superb note spinning.... This is a musical, but not a dramatic division of forces. When the brass ushers in the main grandioso tune which everybody sings, the thing is quite basically divided into treble and bass parts with no difference of character or outlook.¹

If the finale is musically justified according to ottocento style (and it is), dramatically it is justified in terms of its significance for the Risorgimento. The last thing this chorus does is "run down-hill" dramatically. (See discussion above.) Within the operatic context it is the first big patriotic moment with which Risorgimentale Italians could identify. "We are lost", and the subsequent invocation of divine help (the symbol of which was probably more important to the operatic public than the reality) set to a rousing, easily-singable melody would have fascinated them and stimulated their imaginations to identify the aspirations of a Scotland bereft of healthy leadership, with their own situation in a divided and partially oppressed Italy. Many would have remembered the great Hebrew Slaves' Chorus "Va, pensiero!" from Nabucco five years earlier. If the grandioso section (which most vividly recalls "Va, pensiero!" in its throbbing orchestral pulse derived from the division of each beat of a common metre structure into six in second violin, viola and horn, and underscored by the steady four of the other parts) is basically divided into treble and bass parts with no differentiation of character or outlook as Godefroy says, contrary to his negative implication,² that is

¹Godefroy, The Dramatic Genius of Verdi, vol. I, p. 120.

²Godefroy has missed a major significance of the

precisely Verdi's point. The people are united, and must be, to expunge the evil and re-establish healthy order. The Macbeths will not be able to maintain the dual role they now play. The significance of the symbolism and polarization of Good and Evil in terms of meaning for the Risorgimento is clearly defined in this finale.

Summary

Several important points emerge from Act I. Ultimately the most significant is the radical structural alteration which results in the act concluding with the non-Shakespearean chorus, necessary to ottocento operatic structure, but also important from a Risorgimentale perspective. This chorus assumes more significance as a political statement in the light of Verdi's handling of other elements of the drama which the audience would have assimilated, and in the light of which they could subsequently interpret the meaning of the chorus and identify with it. The most notable of these other elements is the re-adjustment of roles, and the uncommon usage of two plural roles, the Witches and the Crowd, each of which functions symbolically as one role. For various reasons, such as necessary operatic condensation, as well as specific intention, Verdi reduced the psychological complexity of his characters in comparison with Shakespeare's, and they thus emerge as polarities. The Macbeths symbolizing

structural change in Macbeth. He has stated, at many points perceptively, how Verdi has jig-sawed Shakespeare to condense the drama from a technical viewpoint, but fails to postulate why in terms of significance for the Risorgimento in terms of content.

negative sense is suggested. Again, by omitting these lines, Verdi rules out the possibility of any other side of Banquo being seen save the thoroughly good, soon-to-be-mortally-wronged friend and subject who is a representative of healthy order. In Verdi there is not one word of Banquo's ambition.

On the other hand, however, the omission of the scene also precludes the audience from an enlightening evaluation of Banquo through Macbeth's eyes. Macbeth not only fears Banquo because of the witches' prophecies, and the fact that Banquo too knows those prophecies, but because

in his royalty of nature
Reigns that which would be fear'd:

III. i. 48-49

Shakespeare's Banquo too is a threat to Macbeth, and yet in the play Macbeth can speak of his "royalty of nature". Verdi's less complex and only noble Banquo is not contradictory to Shakespeare's, but less rounded as a character.

The opening bars of scene i are, as Budden has noted,¹ Macbeth's cry as he emerges from murdering Duncan. (see comparison between examples 8 and 9) In three bars the music forcefully and concisely recalls the murder to the audience's mind, and also makes plain what the Macbeths, who enter to these bars, are thinking. The ensuing recitative they share is "a skeletal precis of Shakespeare's III. ii, with a little extra information thrown in for the audience's benefit."² The information, such as Malcolm's fleeing to England, derives both from Shakespeare's III. i, and the missing II. iv. Yet there is a fundamental difference. In

character, Verdi was wholly justified in giving Lady Macbeth the first big cabaletta-cavatina. She is equal to him and therefore equally entitled to it. Macbeth was not "denied" as Godefroy comments. Godefroy, The Dramatic Genius of Verdi, vol. I, p. 11.

¹Budden, The Operas of Verdi, vol. 1. p. 293.

²Ibid.

the play Lady Macbeth never knows exactly why Macbeth is committed to killing Banquo as well as Duncan. The omission of the full content of the witches' prophecies in the letter Macbeth sent to Lady Macbeth (I. ii) has already been mentioned in context. In the play Macbeth, alone, muses over the fruitlessness of having murdered Duncan while Banquo and Fleance are alive, and later entreats his spouse to "Be innocent of the knowledge, dearest chuck, /Till thou applaud the deed" III. ii. 44-46. Yet in Act II's opening recitative Macbeth expresses his misgivings to his wife as to his ultimate personal success in effecting Duncan's murder. He is afraid of the possibility of the witches' prophecies to Banquo being fulfilled. As he is plotting treachery against Duncan, so he does not rule out that Banquo, or Banquo's children might contemplate treachery against him. In the play, when Macbeth expresses his unease about Banquo and Fleance, Lady Macbeth responds, "But in them Nature's copy's not eterne" (III. ii. 38), implying quite simply that they will not live forever. In Verdi however, the lines are reversed. Lady Macbeth anticipates her husband in stating that Banquo and Fleance yet live, to which he adds, "But they are not immortal", and she continues meaningfully, "Ah yes, they are not!" It is then he announces that other blood must flow. Apparently quite unperturbed, she asks "where?", and "when?", and questions his motivation to complete his intention. The entire recitative is preparatory to Lady Macbeth's magnificent

aria, "La luce langue", which is a wholly Verdian interpolation.¹ The dramatic ease with which these lines of Macbeth's and Lady Macbeth's can be interchanged strongly illustrates the Macbeth oneness in the cause of evil. In Verdi, it doesn't matter which one of them utters the statement; its source is Evil. The fact that it is Lady Macbeth who continues with a statement of power, whichever version is performed, confirms Verdi's purpose in presenting them as one.

Considering operatic necessity for a prima donna aria here, if Lady Macbeth did not have the large-scale brindisi later in the act, this placement of the aria might be deemed to have no further significance than that the prima donna had to have one in the act.² The brindisi, however, eliminates the necessity for another aria for Lady Macbeth, and thus the sole reason for its inclusion at this point was Verdi's desire that it should be here. As he was interpolating his own material anyway, he could as easily have manipulated the plot to give the aria to Macbeth. The care he took over "La luce langue" in 1865 further indicates the importance he saw in this particular characterization of Lady Macbeth, which makes her virtually inhuman in evilness. Verdi himself drafted out the words (rather

¹Although "La luce lanque", a thoroughly brilliant piece of dramatic characterization, belongs to the 1865 revisions and therefore does not have any Risorgimentale significance whatsoever, it replaces a musically inferior prima donna cabaletta in typical primo ottocento fashion, "Trionfai, sicuri alfine", which nevertheless fulfills the same function within the context.

²This is the "relief" act in terms of primo ottocento structure, where traditionally the focus was more on the principal singers than large-scale numbers.

than the librettist) and instead of Shakespeare's Lady Macbeth who says,

Nought's had, all's spent,
Where our desire is got without content:
'Tis safer to be that which we destroy,
Than by destruction dwell in doubtful joy.

III. ii. 4-7

Verdi's Lady celebrates the "voluptuous joy/sensual pleasure of the throne", (volutta del soglio), and asserts that every mortal desire is silenced and quietened in it. She concludes by proclaiming triumphantly that Fleance will soon fall, lifeless. This final section of the aria commences with the direction con trasporto, then lurches along in beats which are a combination of double-dotted crotchets and semi-quavers, con voce pianissima e un po'oscillante with string accompaniment, pianissimo (pia piano possibile). Although this is not Shakespeare's Lady Macbeth at this point, Verdi's is grand and terrible, and fulfills Verdi's purpose admirably.

Scene ii

In Verdi's plot there is no necessity for Macbeth either to justify to the murderers his intent to kill Banquo, or to convince them that it is for the kingdom's good. Verdi's Macbeth is sufficiently evil to kill Banquo and Fleance without cause, but in any event the audience has sufficient information from Macbeth's and Lady Macbeth's recitative in scene i to know that when Banquo's and Fleance's assassins appear in scene ii, it is Macbeth who has hired them. The audience also knows why Macbeth hired the assassins.

This scene is one of the few in the opera which corresponds exactly with the play (III. iii) in terms of

scope. The three murderers easily and conveniently become a male chorus in much the same manner that the witches are divested of their individuality and function as a chorus for the most part. Even between the parts in this chorus there is almost no independence. Much of it is in unison; melodically and harmonically the entire chorus is four-square, and if viewed too critically from any other point of view than that of the primo ottocento (eg. a strictly musical one), it is banal. Within the context however, its rhythmical structure may offer it some justification. The accent often falls on an off-beat, and there is syncopated effect between various orchestral parts and the chorus, throughout the number. While it is so ordinary as to be trite, it nevertheless contributes to the uneasy atmosphere Verdi creates here.¹ From a Shakespearean perspective, having already omitted the murderers' discussion with Macbeth in III. i, the pacing of the drama is improved by this preparation for the murder of Banquo, although due to the economic necessity² of using chorus instead of soloists, it differs from the play's specific content, which, however, does not affect the essential themes in the opera one way or the other.

The dramatic pacing is admittedly a bit stretched out with Banquo's aria as well as the assassin's chorus, but the aria is short, and an expected primo ottocento component.

¹Godefroy's total castigation of the number's dramatic credibility is unfounded, at very least because the audience is not asked to accept anything more unrealistic than is heavily sprinkled through the scores not only of primo ottocento opera, but of the entire genre. Godefroy, The Dramatic Genius of Verdi, p. 125.

²Economy dramatically, but financially in the first place.

The comprimario bass dramatically needed another hearing preceding his mortal conclusion. The non-Shakespearean libretto for the aria performs the further function of re-emphasising the Good-Evil polarity, and does not allow the audience to forget it for one scene. The audience must not become caught up in the drama merely as drama. They must not forget that kingship was murdered; indeed it was on such a night as this that Duncan (il mio signor) was pierced through (trafissero), and the suspense of the dramatic moment is heightened as the foreboding anticipation of what is immanent pervades the scene. The orchestral accompaniment to Banquo's recitative is not musically innovative, but effectively conveys an atmosphere of suspense through dramatic contrasts and variation more than through harmonic or rhythmical means. Godefroy's allegation that with the chorus of assassins the opera is subject to dramatic relaxation at the very point where it should not be, is open to question. Even if it is so, however, Banquo's recitative recovers the tensivity of the drama. The aria does not develop this suspense, and at points fails to sustain it. Again, it is fully recovered in the brief syncopated orchestral interlude between the end of the aria and Banquo's anguished cry to Fleance to flee.

If the content is not wholly Shakespearean, the essence is, as Verdi expands the light-darkness idea which the play so concisely yet poignantly defines in III. iii.

Ban. [Within] Give us a light there, ho!

.

Enter Banquo, and Fleance, with a torch.

2 Mur.

A light, a light!

3 Mur.

'Tis he.

[The First Murderer strikes out the light,
while the others assault Banquo.
III. iii. 9-16

The scene is consistent with the treatment of the Good-Evil theme in the rest of the opera in being more blatant than in the play.

Come dal ciel precipata l'ombra piu sempre oscura!
In notte ugual trafissero Duncano, il mio signor.
Mille affanose immagini m'annunciano sventura,
e il mio pensiero ingombra no di larve e di terror¹

And Banquo's worst fears are realized. Ultimately Banquo's presence and what he says is of far more significance to the drama than what he does. His action is minimized.

Scene iii

The finale immediately contrasts the preceding scene with allegro brillante Italian festal music, and is thoroughly effective in capturing a banquet atmosphere. There is a noteworthy divergence from Shakespeare here, however. The banquet in the play is for lords and nobles only. Verdi's coro prominently displays soprano voices, obviously female, and thus his banquet is a mixed affair. Godefroy regrets this.

The operatic chorus is certainly mixed, and this is really a pity; for Lady Macbeth alone in an all-male symposium, might the more naturally have felt the urge to show her undaunted mettle.²

¹How evening falls darker and darker from the sky!
On such an evening as this my lord Duncan was stabbed
through. A thousand troubling images/memories foretell ruin,
and they crowd my thoughts with phantoms and terror.

²Godefroy, The Dramatic Genius of Verdi, p. 127.

Whether Godefroy's postulation bears any integrity or not is open to question, but in any case he has missed Verdi's point. Had it suited the composer, he could as easily have written a male chorus. Indeed he had composed one for the assassins in the preceding scene. But the whole society is affected by the murder of kingship, and the people need to stand together as an entity against the evil, destructive element. There cannot be fragmentation of strength and presence. Furthermore, if the existing scores are faithful to Verdi, the designation "Guests" significantly plays down the nobility aspect. The banquetees are people. And the meaning for Risorgimentale Italians is obvious. In their quest for political unity, national identification under legitimate and right control, their greatest need was to present a united front. The surest achievement of success did not ultimately rest in the power of lords and nobles, but in the power of the people at large. At this point in the opera it is dramatically expedient to re-emphasize the chorus and all that it stands for, to affirm the position it assumed in Act I.

The crowd chorus has not made an appearance since their massed invocation of divine help in the Act I finale. As their opening lines clearly indicate, their mood has not changed. The king and queen are greeted by the chorus in brief unison phrases. In response to Macbeth's warm welcome and his subsequent invitation to Lady Macbeth to favour them with a brindisi, they reply in a manner which could hardly be more stilted and rhetorical. Macduff and Lady Macbeth's servant join the chorus in unison C's which divide

into simple parts for the trite, extended dominant-tonic cadence which leads into the bridge to the brindisi. Verdi did not allow the opportunity for a stroke of irony which the operatic context afforded him, slip by unused. To such music he set the words, "E tu ne udrai rispondere come ci detta il cor", (And you shall hear us respond as our hearts say/prompt.)

Lady Macbeth's brindisi is thoroughly operatic and wholly unShakespearean (ie. more than non-Shakespearean). Whatever purist critics have to say, however, it is not only musically an excellent brindisi, but it is also dramatically significant. It is a dramatic point of reference which recurs, and from which the scene derives a certain degree of unity. The repeated pattern of acciaccatura followed by a quaver rest and melodic leap of a downward fifth, which is doubled in the orchestra against a strong rhythmical accent, captures not only the expected, rather tipsy character of a drinking song, but also betrays an underlying nervous energy which derives from something stronger than wine. (see example 10) Following on from their last statement that they will "respond as their hearts prompt", the crowd imitates the opening melody of the brindisi in unison, to the words, "Cacciam le torbide cur dal petto; nasca il diletto, . . ." (Let's drive away dull care from our hearts; let delight be born), in a thoroughly heavy and rhetorical manner. Lady Macbeth propels it along in an apparent endeavour to generate more lively enthusiasm, but the section continues to a hackneyed, repetitive dominant-tonic hammering.

The scene derives its most vital energy from the

frequent and dramatic changes in idea which is reflected in the music; this as has been previously noted, is a musical realization of a thoroughly Shakespearean technique. There are nine double bars in the scene, (some of which are not startlingly audible) which is typical of Italian primo ottocento scene structure. It is a structural style which never exhibited the same emphasis on progressive harmonic modulations as its German counterpart. Some of the double bars, however, inaugurate a vividly contrasting element in a manner uncommon at the time.

A double bar separates the opening allegro brillante which effectively sets the festive scene, from the brindisi. This initial vocalization of the brindisi continues at moderate length towards its conclusion, and provides a starkly meaningful background against which Macbeth receives the information from the assassins that Banquo has been dispatched from earthly existence, but the Fleance escaped. The second double bar separates the morendo ending of this brief episode from the return of the allegro brillante, which immediately re-establishes the fact that a banquet is in progress. However, over against this gaiety Lady Macbeth questions her husband as to his withdrawal.

The slight change in procedure between play and opera which occurs at this point is relatively insignificant within the total context, but interesting in its implication for Verdi's relationship with primo ottocento custom. Shakespeare's ghost of Banquo enters and sits in Macbeth's place as Macbeth is lamenting the "grac'd person's" absence. When Rosse asks Macbeth to join them at the table, Macbeth

says that the table is full, whereupon Lenox indicates an empty seat. Macbeth of course does not see it. Verdi, on the other hand, did not have a singer to whom he could give such an insignificant solo part. Macduff¹ would have been his sole possibility, but it would have been thoroughly out of keeping with current operatic structure or custom to give the tenor comprimario a couple of insignificant solo lines without then giving him something later in the scene. Verdi's own opinion on the subject remains.

. . . You will never succeed in endowing the part of Macduff with any particular significance, no matter what you do with it. On the contrary, the more prominence you give it, the more clearly you will reveal its insignificance. He doesn't become a hero until the end of the opera. He has enough music to distinguish himself, if he has a good voice, but there is no need to give him a single note more. To have him take part in the brindisi in the big act, would be dramatically illogical and a mistake. The important person, the dominating demon of the scene, is Lady Macbeth, and though Macbeth has to distinguish himself as an actor, Lady Macbeth, I repeat, must appear to dominate and control everything; she reproves Macbeth for being "quite unmanned", she tells the courtiers to pay no attention to her husband's delirium, "the fit is momentary", and to reassure them the better, she repeats her brindisi with the utmost indifference. This is admirable and coming from her it has the greatest significance; from Macduff it would be absolutely meaningless and dramatically illogical. Is this true or isn't it? Admit that I'm right.²

Verdi reorganized the passage to eliminate the necessity for a third party other than the crowds' exclamation. Lady Macbeth says that Banquo has failed them, whereupon

¹According to Shakespeare, Macduff would not even have been present at the banquet. In the play he expressly purposed to go to Fife and therefore presumably to avoid the banquet which would have followed the investiture. Obviously Verdi needed at least one of his comprimarios present, considering that he has no Rosse or Lenox or other named lord, save the dead Banquo.

²Werfel and Stefan, Verdi: The Man in His Letters,

Macbeth indicates that he will sit in place of him. The Ghost appears and precedes him to the place. Macbeth's exclamation, "Di voi chi ciò fece?" (Which of you has done this?) is the same in both works, but in the play it is dramatically much more low-key than the operatic Macbeth's frantic outburst (the third double bar) and a devastated choral response.

Whatever the lords such as Lenox and Rosse think about the identity of Duncan's assassin, it is hardly likely that they even suspect Banquo is dead, far less that Macbeth has organized his murder. They are merely wondering about Macbeth's mental condition. When Rosse politely says, "Gentlemen, rise; his Highness is not well." (III. iv. 51), Lady Macbeth bids them be seated, and lies like her husband.

Sit worthy friends. My Lord is often thus,
And hath been from his youth: pray you, keep seat;
III. iv. 52-58

Later, when she sees that Macbeth's fit is not momentary, she says,

. . . ; he grows worse and worse;
Questions enrage him. At once, good night:-
Stand not upon the order of your going,
But go at once.

III. iv. 116-118

This time it is Lenox who courteously responds,

Good night, and better health
Attend his majesty!

III. iv. 119

Verdi admits no such civility as this. In similar stolid manner as their response to the brindisi, loaded with implication, the crowd acknowledges that Macbeth is suffering,

and announce their departure, (Macbetto e soffrente! - Partiamo . . .) which Lady Macbeth attempts to defer.

Macbeth's ensuing solo exploits typical Italian resources, in the dramatic, "la! la! la! la! nol ravisi? la!" accompanied by an orchestral part whose interest derives largely from dynamic contrast. Verdi's employment of chromaticism as an effective dramatic tool such as exists in this number, is a progressive element in the opera.

The fourth double bar witnesses Lady Macbeth rasping under her breath to Macbeth, "Voi siete demente!" (You must be demented!), which immediately fades into virtually the only lyrical moment in the opera, as Lady Macbeth endeavours to calm him by tenderness. Momentarily she succeeds, and at his request, the brindisi resumes (fifth double bar) as a toast to the absent Banquo. The detached notes, and the descending pattern of staccato quavers preceded by an acciaccatura, seem even more appropriately bizarre now, and the crowd imitates her once more.

The most startling contrast is marked by the sixth double bar, where the ghost re-appears to an allegro agitato, and there is a fortissimo crash of sound at the superimposition of a new key upon the old without preparation. This comes from the entire orchestra and is sustained for a full bar and one beat. The alteration deprives Lady Macbeth of the coda to the brindisi. The chromatic string parts accompanying Macbeth's outburst (after the seventh double bar) rush up and down to long crescendos and decrescendos, all of which accentuates the dramatization of Macbeth's fear. After the crowd exclaims "Sventura! Terrore!" (Calamity and

terror), the eighth double bar re-introduces Macbeth's raving during which his wife takes the liberty of adding an appropriate but non-Shakespearian aside, "Vergogna, signor!" (Shame, my Lord). Immediately after that the crowd again pronounces "Sventura! Terrore!", but this time pianissimo, which effects a solemn impact in its contrast. Nowhere in Shakespeare does the crowd register the same degree of doom, foreboding and horror that Verdi's crowd expresses. This once again emphasises Verdi's theme of murdered kingship, illegitimate rule and the disaster thereupon incumbent on society.

The final double bar introduces Macbeth's largo, "Sangue a me quell'ombra chiede e l'avra giuro!", the operatic equivalent of "It will have blood, they say: blood will have blood." (III. iv. 121-122) The orchestral writing simply, yet startlingly portrays the overwrought state of Macbeth's emotions.

His vocal line interacts with the accompaniment in similar style, and he expresses his intention to visit the witches again. This announcement in Shakespeare terminates the scene, but in Verdi, it moves straight into the second crowd chorus of vast concerted proportions, in which the people give full vent to their terror in fairly typical primo ottocento finale style, which concludes Act II. As Budden says,

No one would claim that the huge largo, to which there is mercifully no stretta, is one of Verdi's most sublime lyrical transformations. . . . the dramatic expression is confined to the rhythmic and melodic contours of the singers, yet the rock-like firmness of its structure, the momentum of its rhythm and the strength of its climactic cadences and modulations all redeem the rather

commonplace material.¹

Vincent Godefroy offers a somewhat different opinion,

One cannot help wishing, however, that Verdi could have seen his way to following Shakespeare more closely by letting Lady Macbeth send her guests home, so that the usurping king and queen could end this harrowing scene on that note of sheer moral and physical exhaustion that Shakespeare knew must be. It really is not the occasion for a conventional ensemble, however well written. But Verdi had not yet discovered the theatrical strength of a quiet ending.²

Godefroy has overlooked the strong possibility that in the light of the function of the preceding crowd chorus, and the development of the Good-Evil polarity, Verdi wanted the crowd to remain on the scene to witness the fullest manifestations of Macbeth's guilt and evil, the consequences of his foul deed taking their toll on his moral consciousness, and then for the crowd to reinforce their own precarious position memorably. He does this chiefly through the dramatic resource of sheer proportion. Of the approximately twenty-eight minute act, the finale comprises more than fifteen minutes, or over fifty percent of the time. The chorus is dramatically prominent throughout.

It is probable that at this point Verdi was more concerned with his overall architectonic structure in terms of his theme than with primo ottocento operatic convention, and certainly more than he was with Shakespeare. He concluded Act I in a place far removed from the close of Shakespeare's Act I, affording opportunity for the crowd voice to be heard at length. Act II did not require as

¹Budden, The Operas of Verdi, vol. 1, p. 299.

²Godefroy, The Dramatic Genius of Verdi, p. 131.

extensive structural manipulation in order for the extended crowd hearing at the banquet to function as a climax, as Act I did. In terms of the predominant Macbeth theme, the words the chorus repeats are sufficient evidence as to Verdi's specific intention that this chorus should be here exactly as it is. Words make certain aspects of content specific. If therefore, at this point the musical content is highly reminiscent of such emotionally charged moments as the Hebrew Slaves' Chorus from Nabucco, and the great patriotic moments from I Lombardi, as well as recalling its own Act I finale, and the words undeniably substantiate this, then Verdi's purpose obviously extends beyond the requirements or general practices of any tradition. There is specific meaning for the Risorgimento.

The crowd's exclamations of calamity and misfortune are followed by lamentations of the land's having become a den of robbers/ruffians (ladroni). Macduff weaves in his own words as an aside,

Biechi arcani! s'abbandoni questa terra;
or ch'ella e retta da una mano maledetta
viver solo il reo vi puo.¹

This in a sense replaces his missing II. iv speech, where he announces his intention to go to Fife, and thus explains his absence until the scene in England when he and Malcolm are ready to move the counterforce plan into action against Macbeth. His lines here function as a voice coming from among the population, even though the lines are designated

¹Evil secrets! Everyone abandon this land now that she is ruled by a damned hand. Now only the evil one can live here.

as an aside, to assert the knowledge of the source of the social evil. If Verdi's crowd has by implication displayed a strong awareness of that source since immediately after the murder, elaborating on their plight in both finales, where exactly does Shakespeare assert that discovery?

The most satisfactory answer appears to be that as his crowd categorically does not bear much significance, the pinpointing of an exact dramatic moment when their intelligence is enlightened is not notable either. After the murder, as has been mentioned under Act I, the play becomes much more fragmented than does the opera. In a most liberal interpretation the audience gathers by implication from individual voices (primarily those significant to the counterforce action), that they suspect Macbeth's guilt. (For example Malcolm, in Act II. iii. 139 ff., and Macduff in II. iv. 24 ff.) Banquo of course, has little detective work to do, as he explicitly says in III. i.

Conservatively it may be reasonably claimed that nowhere in Shakespeare is it clearly spelled out from the stage who any besides Banquo deem the murderer to be. The somewhat ambiguous, polite statements at the banquet scene, in reaction to Macbeth's hallucinations, can be manipulated dramatically, depending on a particular production. Are the lords covering up their knowledge, feigning politeness to protect their skins, are they suddenly convinced of Macbeth's guilt in a flash of illumination after his strange behaviour, or, (hardly feasible) are they still not wholly convinced when they leave? The answer is not completely self-evident. But for the play it does not matter. The

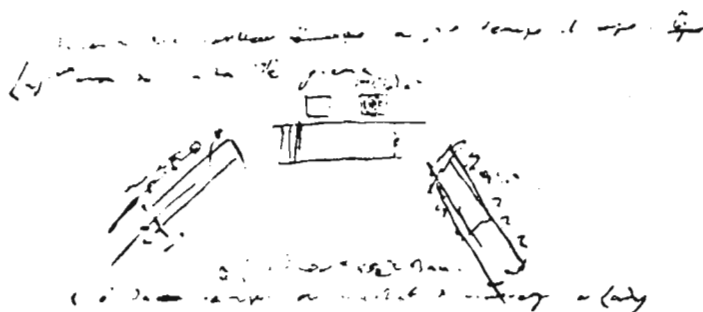
fragmentation of the play's social structure subsequently brings into focus much that occurs off-stage.

The opera, however, in somewhat simplifying the plot structurally, and morally in the polarization of Good and Evil, eliminates much of this ambiguity. The crowd speaks as a united voice; the individual is of secondary importance to the group. Although afraid of the evil that surrounds them, the crowd demonstrates none of the furtiveness that characterizes Shakespeare's scenes, where the lords meet in twos and threes. Verdi's crowd asserts itself. The people must take a bold stand as their only hope of eradicating the evil and restoring healthy government to the society. From an operatic point of view (which is generally dramatically simpler than a play), the audience should know that the people are aware (even if only by implication) of the exact cause of evil in their present problem so that concerted efforts may be effected to expunge it. Good will overcome evil. The opera scene therefore concludes with the focus on the crowd, rather than with the Macbeths alone. Macbeth's lines about going to visit the witches again are interwoven with the chorus.

In conclusion, a note on Verdi's treatment of Banquo's ghost in relation to his presentation of evil in the opera, is in place. Verdi wrote to León Escudier in January, 1865,

Another note on the banquet scene in the second act. I've seen several performances of Macbeth in France, England and Italy. Everywhere they had the ghost of Banquo come out of the wings. It moves nearer, wavers about, menaces Macbeth, and disappears quietly into the wings. This, in my opinion, produces no illusion, inspires no terror, and no one knows whether it's supposed to be a ghost or a man. When I produced "Macbeth" in Florence I had Banquo (with a long gash in

his forehead) come out of a trap-door, precisely at the place meant for Macbeth; he made no motion at all, except to shake his head at the right time. The stage was arranged like this:



This gives Lady Macbeth room to move around, and Lady Macbeth always stays near him to say, in asides to him, the words that the situation demands.¹

Verdi obviously intended for the Ghost to be taken seriously within the operatic context. This would tally with his apparent desire to present the witches seriously also, a desire which, as was shown in Act I, was not very well realized. Because the Ghost only makes these two brief appearances in the same scene, if the scene is handled carefully, as Verdi points out, it can be very effective. The music accompanying the Ghost's appearances reflects the terror which the vision inspires in Macbeth, rather than being reflective of the Ghost itself or some aspect of its nature or appearance. It is at this point that Verdi experienced difficulty in realizing the witches seriously. Their music, in attempting to characterize them, actually portrays them as a group of vagabond gypsies, and hence hardly serious as real elements of evil. The Ghost, on the other hand, by not appearing long enough to demand a musical characterization

¹Werfel and Stefan, Verdi: The Man in His Letters, pp. 235-236.

of his own beyond the dramatic effect he realizes externally in Macbeth, is plausible, where the witches for the most part are not. It is reasonable to speculate that had the Ghost required the amount of music he gave to the witches, Verdi would not have fared any better in projecting at length its seriousness than he did with them.

Summary

Act II further develops the polarity between good and evil characters which Act I has established and maintains the equality of evilness in the Macbeths, although, as Verdi intended, Lady Macbeth is actually the predominant "demon" of the final scene.

In the same way that Verdi delimits the range of audience response to Macbeth from the outset of Act I by omitting any of his commendable biography, he follows through by divesting Macbeth of the ambiguity of his duality which, in the play, he acts out successfully from II. ii. 72 ff., up until the Ghost's appearance at the banquet. The opera does not admit any of this duality; it allows not only the audience, but the other dramatis personae on the stage to witness the real Macbeth in the fulness of his evil. For example, not only does the crowd remain through to the end of the banquet scene to observe the full impact of Macbeth's guilt at work in his conscience, but the messengers are present to see Macbeth's and Banquo's response to the first fulfilment of the witches' prophecies, when Macbeth becomes Thane of Cawdor in Act I. The effect of less separate introspection, less compartmentalization, less dramatic

irony for the work as a whole is that the entire dramatic purpose becomes much more straightforward, and obvious to all. The main concerns are not hidden under piles of operatic trapping. In giving such prominence to the banquet, the central crisis of the play, Verdi has been exploring a Shakespearean theme.

Act III

As Act II was, at Verdi's intention, presided over by Lady Macbeth in the extended finale, so Act III belongs chiefly to the world of the witches. Shakespeare's III. v, the Hecate scene, which is deemed by most leading twentieth-century scholars to be spurious, is absent in Verdi, as is III. vi, in which Lenox and a Lord fill in details of the counterforce movement which is getting under way. For the most part, except for a few specific interpolations, Verdi followed his Shakespearean model fairly closely. This act witnesses a seemingly strange reversal of what occurs in the preceding two acts. Instead of condensing Shakespeare, as he does in I and II, Verdi's entire third act derives from an expansion of Shakespeare's IV. i. 1-135. The ballet for the 1865 Paris revision and Lady Macbeth's entrance at the end were also added. Act III is without doubt the weakest of Verdi's four, and it is therefore not insignificant that it received more extensive revision for the 1865 version than the others did.

The reappearance of the witches at this point provided Verdi with an excellent opportunity to recall elements of their earlier music. This dramatically establishes the atmosphere he evidently wanted, immediately. By the repetition, the work also received a more tightly-knit structure of dramatic reference. There is an exact quotation of the Prelude's opening bars, except here they are in E minor, while the prelude is in F minor. The same descending three-note pattern which occurs in the second phrase of the Prelude is heard again. (It is probably more correct to say

that the Prelude fragments derived from the material of Act III.) This phrase is also found in the opening of I. i, but in a different rhythm, due to that scene commencing in $\frac{4}{4}$ rather than the $\frac{6}{8}$ time of the Prelude opening, and that of Act III.

The three groups of witches enter consecutively as in I. i, each with the same melodic phrase (opening bars of Prelude), and each repeating the line higher than the last in a progression moving from E minor - G - B minor. The chorus corresponds fairly closely to Shakespeare's "Thrice the brinded cat hath mew'd." (IV. i. ff.) The same patterns of staccatos, accents, trills, which the witches exhibit in Act I and which combine to create banality, do not enhance their characterization as instruments of evil here. They still resemble gypsy peasants, and are, quite frankly, rather ridiculous as witches. Virtually all that has been said concerning them and their intended or actual relationship to evil in Act I applies to this opening chorus.

Shakespeare's stage direction [enter Hecate, and the other three Witches] immediately after "Thrice the brinded cat hath mew'd", afforded Verdi a dramatically feasible place to interpolate the ballet for the 1865 revision which Paris at that time insisted upon. As it therefore has no dramatic significance for the Risorgimento whatsoever, discussion of its musical quality may be ignored in the present context.

Of the revisions Verdi wrote,

This third act is entirely new, with the exception of a part of the first chorus and the dance of the elves

when Macbeth faints.¹

The changes he made to the apparition scene however, are largely of musical consequence,

widening the range of tonality, improving the instrumentation, altering the melodic contours here and there to aid the declamation and enriching the design with fragments of arioso and passages in strict time²

rather than an extensive alteration of the essential dramatic framework. In both versions the text remains the same, and Verdi follows Shakespeare fairly closely. The technique of juxtaposing diverse musical fragments is used effectively throughout, as is witnessed in frequent rhythmical and tonal changes.

In this particular scene of Act III it becomes apparent that Verdi could hardly have intended the witches to be other than serious all the way through the work. For this scene to make any sense at all, they have to be serious. After all, they do speak an element of truth; they accurately foretell Macbeth's fortune (or otherwise). In this scene even though they may not match the effect of Berlioz's witches in Simfonie Fantastique they are not laughable. They have no cackling jigs, no Neapolitan buffo ditties. The unison, monotone response, "Un'opra senza nome", to Macbeth's questioning of their activities has a sinister resemblance to liturgy. The witches, their rituals and revelries ended, now take on a far more sinister aspect, singing unison material as though their occult powers are diabolically and

¹Werfel and Stefan, Verdi: The Man in His Letters, p. 234.

²Budden, The Operas of Verdi, p. 302.

single-mindedly ranged together against him.¹

Even though the 1865 ballet has no Risorgimentale significance, Verdi's directions concerning it further affirm the seriousness of the entire supernatural element in the opera.

The machinist and the régisieur will enjoy this act! You will see that there is a bit of plot in the ballet, which fits very well with the rest of the drama. The appearance of Hecate, Goddess of the Night, works out well--she interrupts the infernal dances with a sober, severe adagio. I don't need to tell you that Hecate shouldn't dance at all, but only mime. And I also needn't point out that this adagio must be played by the bassett horn or bass clarinet (as is specified), so that in unison with the 'cello and bassoon, it produces a hollow, forbidding tone which suits the situation. Please ask the conductor, too, to supervise the work on the dance music from time to time, so that the ballet dancers keep the tempi I have prescribed. You know ballet dancers always change the tempo. (At the Grand Opéra for example, they say the Tarantella can't be danced the way I want it. But a gamin of Sorrento or Capua would dance it very well at my tempo.) If the tempi are changed, the witches' ballet will lose all its character and won't produce the effect of which, in my opinion, it is capable.²

The opening of the andante maestoso which heralds the appearance of the apparitions has been previewed in the Prelude, only here, with the strength of the 1865 musical additions and improvements, it is far more powerful, creating an effect Shakespeare might have been envious to intend in his direction,

Thunder. First Apparition, an armed head.

IV. i.

The musical means which Verdi employed to convey the atmosphere he wished are fairly simple, yet effective.

¹Godefroy, The Dramatic Genius of Verdi, p. 133.

²Letters to Léon Escudier, January, 1865, in Werfel and Stefan, Verdi: The Man in His Letters, pp. 234-235.

Simultaneously Macbeth's evil is again intensified from the play. At the disappearance of the second apparition, the change of key in mid-phrase as he seals Macduff's doom as a double protection for his own royal breast, and the direction feroce, is at very least more dramatically ostentatious than Shakespeare's,

Then live, Macduff: what need I fear of thee?
 But yet I'll make assurance double sure,
 And take a bond of Fate: thou shalt not live;
 That I may tell pale-hearted fear it lies,
 And sleep in spite of thunder.--

IV. i. 82-85

Macbeth exults at the impossibility of Birnam Wood moving, in lines which resemble aria, but which move through four rapid key changes. These are illustrative of his highly-charged emotional excitement. Briefly he assumes his triumph through evil.

There is no known evidence as to Verdi's interpretation of the exact meaning of Shakespeare's apparitions, but nor does it matter within the context. They are as serious as the witches; their appearance further validates the Act I query as to whether or not the devil speaks true. Ultimately it is their effect on Macbeth and his response to them within the context which is of most importance. Dramatically they are well conceived. Their parts are sung off-stage by a baritone and two sopranos respectively, with chant-like melodic lines hollowly accompanied by winds.

The academic question as to why Verdi has eight kings instead of Shakespeare's nine remains unanswered, but again, it is of no dramatic significance. In a footnote Budden comments,

Spike Hughes justly observes that the librettist has telescoped Shakespeare's instructions in making Banquo himself the eighth king with a glass in his hand.¹

It is not worth troubling over. The important thing as far as the plot is concerned is that whatever number he is, the last king is Banquo. Immediately afterwards Verdi makes his strangest departure from Shakespeare. Macbeth faints. Most peculiar is the fact that there is not another of Verdi's interpolations following the coro e ballabile which is in some way dependent on Macbeth's fainting.² In Shakespeare Macbeth stands while the witches dance, and comments upon their revelries immediately afterwards. If Verdi wanted Lady Macbeth there at the conclusion of the dance he could easily have devised a different opening gambit for her than finding her spouse arousing from a dead faint. While the consequential dramatic significance of her appearance at this point in Verdi is considerable, the immediate context is little affected proportionately by the exchange of Lenox for her. Macbeth is engaged in dialogue with either Lady Macbeth or Lenox until the end of the scene. The 1847 aria for Macbeth which originally concluded Act III is in a sense more true to Shakespeare, drawing upon Macbeth's final lines (IV. i. 144-156), and sealing the fate of all the inhabitants of the Macduff castle without Lady Macbeth being implicated in this decision at all. Of the revision Verdi wrote,

I close with a duet between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. It seems to me quite logical that Lady Macbeth, who

¹Budden, The Operas of Verdi, p. 302.

²Shakespeare's "Music. [The Witches dance, and vanish.]" offers an opportunity for ballet which even for 1847 Italy was too good to miss.

watches constantly over her husband, should have found out where he is. The end of the act is better this way.¹

From a Shakespearean point of view, a major objection to Lady Macbeth's appearance at the cauldron scene is that as far as the rapidity of her disintegration is concerned, the interim between this and her sleepwalking scene is too brief to be even semi-realistic. Shakespeare keeps her offstage for long enough so that when she reappears in the sleepwalking scene the missing scenes in the off-stage progress of her disintegration can be accepted without question. However, the spacial removal effected by the large refugees' chorus with which Act IV commences, and which simultaneously heralds a totally different atmosphere immediately removing Act IV from Act III, would seem to suggest dramatically that by logical deduction her inclusion at the end of Act III cannot be castigated on that score.

From another perspective, although Verdi demonstrated that he was not bound by contemporary operatic convention in omitting Lady Macbeth from his Act III, it was rather unusual for the prima donna to be omitted from an entire act. That may be implied in part in Verdi's saying that from his point of view the act concludes more satisfactorily with the duet than with the aria.

The effect of Lady Macbeth's presence would suggest another aspect of Verdi's structuring which is more obviously important. At his announcement that Banquo's offspring would reign, she bursts out in a frenzied rage of, "Lies! Lies!"

¹Werfel and Stefan, Verdi: The Man in His Letters, p. 234.

over sharp, fortissimo chords, and continues to affirm Macbeth's murderous intentions concerning Macduff's family. Together they determine, "Vendetta! Vendetta! Vendetta!", and she rejoices that she again sees Macbeth's indomitable self being asserted. His nerve has been revitalized. In this non-Shakespearean climax to the act she inevitably becomes infinitely more evil than in the play. She remains more of a constant presence, and their equality is rigorously maintained. Not only the Macduffs will die, but she reaffirms Fleance's doom where Shakespeare does not. Singly and combined their evil at this point oversteps that of the dramatic source. Budden comments,

It is a case in which the departure from Shakespeare is justified in terms of opera. Psychologically it is all wrong. If Macbeth needed no goading at the start of Act II he needs it even less now. At this stage in the drama Lady Macbeth is a spent force - quite how spent will appear in the next act. It is utterly inappropriate to give her this new access of strength; and it would be fatal to the dramatic balance in a spoken play. But in this duet the two characters are in equilibrium. Its form suggests a compression of the similar duet for unequal voices in which one repeats the other's music at a different pitch. The imitation is confined to single phrases, which are increasingly telescoped as each singer presses harder on the other's heels.¹

In revising the work at the distance of several years Verdi did not deny his earlier purpose. He reaffirmed the central themes by musically improving specific numbers so that the original dramatic purpose is more precisely realized. Furthermore, Verdi thereby reaffirmed that a work which has a specific contemporary significance does not necessarily lose its significance when the immediate context alters.

¹Budden, The Operas of Verdi, vol. 1, p. 305.

If Macbeth had only been of value to the Risorgimento era, then Verdi would have been wasting his time by revising the work in 1865. Verdi knew better. A work which is generally and specifically rooted to a certain period of time and social context will, if it is a good work, also have an enduring significance. And it is for that very reason Verdi could use Shakespeare.

Summary

While Act III is the least significant of the four in terms of meaning for the Risorgimento, it affirms Verdi's serious intent concerning the use of the supernatural in the opera, demanding a contextual acceptance of their reality. Lady Macbeth is again elevated in her evil, and in the final scene she and her husband are equally vindictive and terrible. Act III does not present the contrast of Good and Evil, but builds up the latter element in the process of dramatically conditioning the audience to feel the fullest impact of the devastating contrast in the next act.

Act IV

Scene i

The crowd voice has not been heard in Act III at all, and the effect of the mass entrance at the opening of Act IV in lamentation of their plight as refugees, is profound. The most immediately striking, and ultimately one of the most significant departures from Shakespeare is that the focal point of the English scene is transferred from individuals to People as a corporate whole. Thus at once the audience could identify with the oppressed, the politically

alienated, disunified as refugees, and feel within themselves a stirring to unity and national identity. The musical version of the Act IV opening almost always performed today dates from 1865, and is quite different from the 1847 number.¹ As with some of the Act III revisions, however, while the music has been improved, the dramatic impact remains essentially the same. It is a patriotic chorus which derives its power from the association of explicit words with music of serious nature which is easily singable (that is, has a melody which is not difficult to grasp and remember, without rhythmical or virtuosic complexity). There is nothing inherent in the music that could be labelled as patriotic fervour. It is the associations such music has often had with military occasions, and the words brought to the music that cause it to be termed "typically patriotic." While at the same time this music might be said to be religious in emotion, structurally it bears no resemblance to the old Italian sacred tradition, of which Palestrina is a prime example. The style is romantic and structurally straightforward.

The words as mentioned in the summary of structural outline, indirectly echo part of Rosse's speech, and those of Malcolm and Macduff in the missing IV, iii, the scene of individual focus for which Verdi exchanged the massed chorus.

Patria oppressa!
 Patria oppressa!
 il dolce nome, no, di madre
 aver non puoi,
 or che tutta a'figli tuoi
 sei conversa in un avel!

¹For a musical comparison between the two versions see Budden, The Operas of Verdi, vol. I, pp. 305-306.

D'orfanelli e di piangenti
 chi lo sposo e chi la prole
 al venir del nuovo sole
 s'alza un grido e fere il ciel.
 A quel grido il ciel risponde
 quasi voglia impietosito
 propagar per l'infinito,
 Patria oppressa, il tuo dolor.

.
 Patria oppressa! Patrio oppressa!
 Patria mia! Oh, patria!¹

Macd. Bleed, bleed, poor country!
 Great tyranny, lay thou thy basis sure,
 For goodness dare not check thee! wear thou thy
 wrongs;

IV. iii. 32-34

Mal. I think our country sinks beneath the yoke;
 It weeps, it bleeds; and each new day a gash
 Is added to her wounds:

IV. iii. 39-41

Macd. O Scotland! Scotland!

IV. iii. 100

Rosse. Alas, poor country!
 Almost afraid to know itself. It cannot
 Be call'd our mother, but our grave; where nothing,
 But who knows nothing, is once seen to smile;
 Where sighs, and groans, and shrieks that rent the air
 Are made, not mark'd; where violent sorrow seems
 A modern ecstasy: the dead man's knell
 Is there scarce ask'd for who; and good men's lives
 Expire before the flowers in their caps,
 Dying or ere they sicken.

IV. iii. 164-173

Verdi's geographical scramble in setting the beginnⁿg of his
 Act IV. i on the border between England and Scotland and
 then entering Macduff for the following scena ed aria with
 Malcolm leading on a host of English soldiers in Birnam Wood,
 a long way north, does not dramatically affect the work at

¹Oppressed homeland! You cannot bear the sweet
 name of Mother now that to your children you have changed
 totally into a tomb. The cry of orphans and sorrowing ones,
 some widowed and some fatherless, rises at the breaking of
 day and strikes heaven. The sky, overcome with pity,
 responds to the cry as if it wished to spread your sorrow
 throughout the universe. Oppressed homeland! My homeland!
 Oh, homeland!

all. In fact Verdi streamlined the Shakespeare from eleven scenes into four, with little essential dramatic material omitted, and evidently nothing that he felt was dramatically significant.

Verdi's process of polarizing characters in the opera is again evidenced in his treatment of Macduff, in the following number. As has been noted in the discussion of Act II, Shakespeare's Macduff leaves Macbeth's court and the country before the banquet scene, abandoning his wife and family who are subsequently murdered in Shakespeare's IV. ii. Verdi omitted this scene in which a slight shadow is cast on Macduff's discretion.

Enter Lady Macduff, her Son, and Rosse.

L. Macd. What had he done, to make him fly the land?

Rosse. You must have patience, Madam.

L. Macd. He had none:
His flight was madness: when our actions do not,
Our fears do make us traitors.

Rosse. You know not,

Whether it was his wisdom, or his fear.

L. Macd. Wisdom! to leave his wife, to leave his babes,
His mansion, and his titles, in a place
From whence himself does fly? He loves us not:
He wants the natural touch;

IV. ii. 1-9

In accordance with his essential goodness, Macduff himself echoes his wife's sentiments when he is informed of the plundering of his castle (IV. iii). Added to his basic goodness, his sincere remorse alleviates some of the negative feeling the audience is prone to levy against him, in their sympathy with his murdered wife's last thoughts. Verdi effects a subtle shift in audience response to this Macduff subscenario. Because IV. ii, is absent, and Lady Macduff does not exist dramatically within the context, no audience

sympathy for her has been elicited; she is a non-entity. She exists only in third-person reference, first when Macbeth seals her doom and that of her children in the Act III finale, and then in this passionate outburst of Macduff's. In essence the aria is very close to Shakespeare, both generally in emotional content, and specifically in the words. However, because the audience has only heard of Lady Macduff as an extension of Macduff, so to speak, without being exposed to her as an individual, and to her feelings of abandonment by her husband, this aria shifts the emphasis from Macduff's responsibility in not protecting his family better, to the inhumanity of the Macbeths in having the murder carried out. Macduff is exonerated, and the evilness of the Macbeths is further magnified. It is true that in the play too, the scope of Macbeth's evil is increased in the corresponding scene, but Macduff appears both wronged and rather negligent of his family in fleeing the country.¹ Verdi's Macduff only appears as mortally wronged. Especially following directly after the large and very moving refugees' chorus, the opera presents the overriding social need for Macduff to be mustering a counterforce to Macbeth's evil. Therefore, even though he accuses himself. (Ah, fra gli artigli/ di quel tigre io lasciai la madre e i figli,² he is portrayed as thoroughly noble; his first obligation is to his country. This particular aria is all the more striking because it is uncommon in

¹Roy Walker's postulation that Macduff increased their safety by abandoning them is at very least far-fetched. See The Time is Free, pp. 306-307.

²How could I have left the mother and my children to the claws of that tiger?!

ottocento structure to reserve the main tenor solo until the last act. Although, as Budden comments¹, it is a very unorthodox 1847-style romanza in minor-major form, it serves its dramatic function admirably, soliciting the deepest audience sympathy without being ostentatiously melodramatic in context. First Banquo, and now Macduff, has emerged as an individual, suffering spokesman from among the crowd. But these are the only two. All the other individual sufferings, including those of Lady Macduff and her son, are absorbed into and sublimated in the corporate suffering of the entire oppressed society. Again the meaning for nineteenth-century Italy is clear. While the sufferings of the individual call for sympathy and demand retribution, the massed cry for freedom from tyranny has an immeasurably broader perspective and impact. Each member of the audience could identify in some manner; that person could become part of the crowd, one with the oppressed, feel the same longings and determination to stand unitedly against the oppressor, which for nineteenth-century Italy was Austria. Verdi's use of Shakespeare here is thus of peculiar interest; both he and Verdi project the same basic ideas through different dramatic means to an effect which is neither completely diverse, nor exactly the same.

The entrance of Malcolm with the soldiers instantly identifies him with his father Duncan, as the music is of the same military banda variety. This is another expression of the people's determination to avenge the wrongs of their

¹Budden, The Complete Operas of Verdi, vol. 1, pp. 306-307.

land. The words,

La Patria tradita	Our betrayed country
Piangendo ne invita!	Invites us to tears!
Fratelli! gli oppressi	Brothers! Let us fly
corriamo a salvar	To rescue the oppressed

comprised the final crowd expression in the 1847 Macbeth, and even before the battle and slaying of Macbeth, are a positive affirmation that the counterforce will triumph. The tone has radically altered from the lamentation of "Patria oppressa" to an expectation of impending victory. It dramatically identifies with Shakespeare's IV. iii. 236-240.

Mal. Come go we to the King: our power is ready;
Our lack is nothing but our leave. Macbeth
Is ripe for shaking, and the Powers above
Put on their instruments. Receive what cheer you may;
The night is long that never finds the day.

Scene ii

The sleepwalking scene adheres fairly closely to Shakespeare's V. i, and is musically "a high point of the Florence Macbeth,¹ a scene unique in all Italian opera of the time."²

The whole of Lady Macbeth's speech is included; And the fact that it is in prose in Maffei's Italian no less than in Shakespeare has not prevented Verdi from working it into a design of modified symmetry - two stanzas of eighteen bars apiece, the first ending in D flat, the second in E major; a shorter verse of nine bars returning to the original key, and a sixteen-bar coda.³

Essentially the same effect is achieved; her evilness is

¹I.e. the 1847 version.

²Budden, The Operas of Verdi, vol. I, p. 308.

³Ibid.

fully exposed and complete. In a sense Verdi had the more difficult task, as it required greater ingenuity to portray the depth of evil she is steeped in, in a pianissimo andante than in straight drama. One of the most successful means of achieving the sense of evilness combined with the increasing imbalance of her mind, is his exploitation of the soprano's lowest register. In her final appearance Lady Macbeth has not lessened one degree in her evilness, although her aggressive spirit is no longer evident. She is about to receive her due reward, to the country's and people's relief.

Scene iii

Verdi omitted Shakespeare's V. ii, without any dramatic break in plot, and based his scene iii on Shakespeare's V. iii, in which Macbeth has opportunity for his final aria. Within the context of his thorough-going evilness, this aria, his only truly lyrical moment in the opera, creates a chilling effect precisely because at this point it is wholly unexpected. His evilness has reached mad proportions, yet amidst it he laments the sense that his life is draining from his veins. (Eppur la vita sento nelle mie fibre inaridita!)¹ The ideas for the libretto derive from Shakespeare's V. ii, "my way of life / Is fall'n into the sere, the yellow leaf;" v. iii. 22-23). Budden summarizes the musical effectiveness of Macbeth's aria.

The aria uses the simple design with a new breadth and freedom. The second limb of the melody (a²) is extended with verbal repetition into a melting dominant cadence. There is no a³; instead the music strikes out unexpectedly into E major, at the words 'Sol la bestimmia',

¹And yet I feel my life dried up in the fibre of my being.

returning to the home key of D flat within the final three bars. By way of compensation the main theme is restated as a full-throated melody for upper woodwind and divisi violins in octaves in a regular eight-bar period remaining firmly in D flat throughout and joined by the voice as it moves towards the final cadence. This kind of orchestral invention, as though the composer was associating himself directly with the singer's grief, is new and prophetic.¹

The rest of V. iii, V. iv and the first part of scene v are omitted, again without detriment to the dramatic thread. Aside from the major portion of Macbeth's "Tomorrow and tomorrow, and tomorrow" speech being omitted, Macbeth's reaction to the news of Lady Macbeth's demise is very close to the Shakespeare. Essentially there is nothing left to say. The outworking of her evil has taken its full and final toll. She has preceded her husband "the way to dusty death." Fortunately for the credibility of the opera, Verdi adds no moralizing touches concerning the fate of the evil.

The rest of the act in the 1847 version is relatively predictable, musically comprising a battle scene. The music is frankly military, and adequate to the purpose, but not outstanding in any way. It is what would have been expected from a primo ottocento standpoint, and it is not out of keeping with the essence of the Shakespearean drama at this point. Verdi condensed scenes vi, vii and viii, and thus conveniently omitted characters not included elsewhere in the opera.

In the 1847 version, Macbeth dies on stage at the end of the battle, and the curtain falls. Although a deviation from Shakespeare, it is legitimate in terms of the requirements of contemporary Italian opera; it affords a dramatic

¹Budden, The Operas of Verdi, vol. 1, p. 309.

ending. There is little clue from Verdi's correspondence as to why he effected this change from his dramatic model, but in keeping with the consistently developing themes of the opera it is also satisfactory, as the evil is thus ultimately conquered even though the further step of restoring legitimate kingship and order is confined to one operatic line, where Macloim is hailed as king.

When it came to the Paris revision, Verdi wrote to Léon Escudier, "I too am of the opinion that we should change the death of Macbeth, but can't think of anything better than a final hymn."¹ There is no doubt that in all the points of revision Verdi's primary concern was a musical and dramatic one. However it is not impossible that whether he was aware of it or not, there were ideological implications which affected his revisions. For instance, why did he think a hymn would be fitting at the conclusion, after a time-lapse of eighteen years? Was it merely because it balanced out the other three crowd choruses and left the last, affirmative word with the cumulative voice? Or was it perhaps because in the intervening years some sort of unified national order had been achieved under Cavour (even though Mazzini's thwarted idealism provoked him to call the leaders 'immoral materialists') and the healthier political atmosphere in Italy encouraged him to concentrate at greater length on the victory of the overthrow of evil by the legitimate ruler, Malcolm? At this point any answer would be mere conjecture, but the questions warrant the asking.

¹Budden, The Operas of Verdi, vol. 1, p. 310.

The idea of redemption, invoked in the Act I finale, is drawn through to its positive conclusion in the 1865 ending, where the Redeemer is thanked.

Salgan a tel le grazie, gran Dio vendicator!
A chi ne libero inni di giubilo cantiam!¹

Summary

These relatively brief scenes are straightforward both musically and dramatically, and do not add any new elements to the general themes already set out in the opera. They do, however, complement and affirm the previous material, and carry its progression through to the typically (from a contemporary ottocento perspective) victorious conclusion.

¹May my thanks rise to Thee, great God, vindicator!
To him who freed us we sing hymns of gladness.

CONCLUSION

There are three considerations which the entire topic of discussion brings into focus. Firstly, because Verdi lived and composed during the Risorgimento, there are certain ramifications which might logically be expected to be evidenced in his work. Secondly, because he used Shakespeare as a dramatic source, the consideration of the relevance of the content of the work of an Elizabethan to nineteenth-century Italians emerges. Thirdly, because Verdi's Risorgimento operas were musically of the primo ottocento there are certain conventions associated with that style which would also be expected to appear, and the way in which they are incorporated is related to the above factors.

The composer's stance within the context of the Risorgimento is fairly explicitly defined. It finds implicit statement within his work, and specifically in Macbeth. In the final analysis, Verdi's use of Shakespeare (an artist belonging to much earlier stages of the same European bourgeois-democratic revolution) for specific Risorgimentale purposes, is relatively simple and even blatant. In keeping with ottocento style Verdi simultaneously exploited the dramatic potential in the structure of the Shakespearean work and re-defined the content with the significance he intended for his revolutionary age. He achieved this partly by simplifying the psychological

framework of the play. He created clearly-defined symbols of Good (Banquo, Macduff, Duncan, and most importantly the Crowd Chorus) and Evil (Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, or the Macbeths) with which to play out the drama of eradicating evil from society and restoring healthy government. The symbols were easily identifiable to the contemporary audience who hailed Verdi as one of their spokesmen in the years of the national struggle for unity. In a sense Verdi has shifted the emphasis from the tragedy of Macbeth to the tragedy and triumph of the People.

Macbeth is not a great opera in terms of the combination of musical and dramatic brilliance. That it deserves a nobler position in the operatic repertory than it currently enjoys is, however, certain. But Macbeth is a work of utmost historical importance for what it said to, and says of the era which produced it.

Kettle concludes an essay on Shakespeare thus:

...literature is a part of living and it is from its relationship with the whole of life that it draws its energy and delight and value; and a great piece of literature like one of Shakespeare's major plays is great not only because it makes us apprehend on our pulses the area of life it presents for our inspection, but because in doing so it has the power to affect the way we ourselves live. ...Shakespeare...is, above all, a writer who, in the complex ways of art, better than any other helps men and women to understand what it means to be a man or woman and hence affect and change their world.¹

In a similar measure this could be said of Verdi. His use of Shakespeare for the Risorgimento has produced a work of continuing interest and value.

¹Kettle, ed., Shakespeare in a Changing World, p. 16.

EXAMPLE 1

Prelude

1

p

pp

tr. 5

10

Adagio $\text{♩} = 60$

pp

3

3

3

3

etc. | bars 15-16 |

pp

The three contrasting sections commence at bars 1, 11 and 17 respectively.

EXAMPLE 2

Act I sc. i

Allegro $\text{♩} = 104$

Noisy, mock-military flourish in the strings.

EXAMPLE 3

Act I sc. ii

Andantino $\text{♩} = 72$

Grandioso

Vie - - - - ni! t'affret - - ta! Ac -

cen - - - - de - re

Note particularly the rhythmical structure of both this and the following example, both of which are hallmarks of early Verdian orchestration.

EXAMPLE 4 Beginning of Cabaletta from Act I sc. ii

Lady
Macbeth

Allegro maestoso ♩ = 104 *a poco a poco cresc.*

Or tut - ti sor -

ge - te, mi - ni - stri in - fer

na - li

The difference in rhythm between the previous example from Lady Macbeth's Cavatina in the same act, and this Cabaletta, is merely a change from $\frac{6}{8}$ to C time. Essentially the structures are the same.

EXAMPLE 5 Act I sc. ii

The musical score is written in 3/4 time and B-flat major. It is divided into three systems of staves. The first system consists of a treble and bass staff, marked *Adagio* and *ppp*. The second system also consists of a treble and bass staff, marked *Allegro* with a tempo of quarter note = 126 and *ff*. The third system continues the *Allegro* section with a treble and bass staff. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

Instrumental commencement of Macbeth's and Lady Macbeth's Scena, immediately before Macbeth's Verdian equivalent of the dagger speech.

EXAMPLE 6

Act I sc. ii

Presto $\text{♩} = 120$

L.M. *Mac-bet - - - - to! non t'ac-cu - si un vil ti -*

Macb. *potessi il sonno, il sonno spezzar!*

L.M. *mor, ah non - ti vinca un vil - ti - mor.*

Macb. *potessi, potessi il sonno a te spezzar.*

Effective counterpointing of Macbeth's line with Lady Macbeth's. Bar 23 in the score is represented by the first bar above. Note the rhythmical disjuncture Verdi achieved to heighten the effect of the scene, by giving Macbeth three-note fragments commencing on the second beat of the bar, with the accent on the third beat. Lady Macbeth's over-affected ornaments on the first beat of the bar not only provide the rhythmical counter to Macbeth's part, but characterize her emotional state at this moment in the opera. She is becoming unhinged while presenting an appearance of holding herself together.

EXAMPLE 7

Act I Finale

Largo $\text{♩} = 54$

Ban-
quo

Or
qual or-

pp

- ren - - - - - da not - - - - - fe!

Opening bars of Banquo's lines near the beginning of the Act I Finale. Verdi expresses human emotion, Banquo's fear and sense of encroaching doom, through his orchestration, as described on p. 106.

EXAMPLE 8

Act I Finale

Macbeth

Tutto è finito!

The musical notation shows a single staff in bass clef with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat) and a common time signature (C). The melody consists of six notes: a half note G2, a quarter note A2, a quarter note B-flat2, a quarter note C3, a quarter note D3, and a half note E3. The notes are written on a five-line staff with a double bar line at the end.

Macbeth's cry as he emerges from murdering Duncan. Compare this with the following example from Act II sc. i. The melodic repetition recalls the murder very forcefully to the listener's mind, setting the scene for the dramatic development of the ensuing scene.

EXAMPLE 9

Act II sc. i

The musical notation consists of two staves, treble and bass clef, in common time (C). The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The first staff begins with a fortissimo (ff) dynamic marking. The melody in the treble clef consists of a half note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note B-flat4, a quarter note C5, a half note D5, and a half note E5. The bass clef staff provides a harmonic accompaniment with a half note G3, a quarter note A3, a quarter note B-flat3, a quarter note C4, a half note D4, and a half note E4. The notation includes various accidentals (flats) and dynamic markings (ff, p, f) across the staves.

EXAMPLE 10

Act II sc. iii

LADY

Si col mi il ca-li-ce di vi-no e - let - to; na-sca il di -

let - to, muo-ia il do-lor. Da noi s'in - vo-li-no gli odi e gli

sde - gni, fol-leg - gi e re - gni qui so - lo a - mor.

a - mor. Gu - stiamo il bal - samo d'o-gni fe - ri - ta, che -

nuo - va vi - ta ri - do - na al cor - Cac - ciam le tor - bi - de

cu - re dal pet - to; nasca il di - let - to, muo - ia il do -

lor.

Lady Macbeth's brindisi

DIAGRAM I

Comparison Between General Ottocento Operatic Structure
and Macbeth.

<u>Ottocento Structure</u>	<u>Macbeth</u>
ACT	ACT
I usually opens with a crowd scene/chorus	I chorus (witches)
solo section	recitative, duet with chorus (Macbeth/Banquo)
larger and larger ensembles, quartet or quintet common.	chorus (witches)
finale to first act usually secondary climax of opera	recitative, cavatina/cabaletta (Lady Macbeth)
	recitative/March (Duncan's arrival)
	arioso (Macbeth)
	recitative, duet (Lady Macbeth/Macbeth)
	large-scale finale
II usually more reflective, deals with principals more.	II scene and aria (Lady Macbeth)
more flexible	chorus (cutthroats)
usually does not commence with crowd scene	grand scene of Banquo's demise, banquet, principals featured, but also concluding chorus.
(Verdi's greatest duets often come in Act II)	[III extended scene (witches, Macbeth, apparitions, Lady Macbeth)]
often ends with a large extended ensemble number	
III usually very similar in structure to Act I, but often simpler.	IV chorus
grand finale	scene and tenor aria (Macduff)
	scene and aria (Lady Macbeth)
	scene and aria (Macbeth)
	battle scene (forces building up)
	grand finale

DIAGRAM 2

Rough Comparison Between Structure of Play and Opera

<u>Play</u>	<u>Opera</u>
ACT I witches	ACT I witches
ends with Macbeth pondering murder.	murder complete, huge crowd CHORUS to invoke help of God in redemption of people. Seems little doubt in minds of people as to who murderer is.
II murder, fragmentation of leadership. Char- acters seen furtively meeting in small groups as individuals.	(Verdi leaves out end of play's II, beginning of III.)
III Banquo. Macbeth reasons with murders.	II Castle party - very promi- nent in size. (Banquo's murder)
Castle party (Banquo's murder)	Crowd stays through Macbeth's visions.
Crowd leaves at Macbeth's "illness".	CHORUS lamenting that Scotland has become a "den of ruffians".
IV witches - short in comparison with opera.	III Macbeth and the witches (1865 ballet interpolated) Lady Macbeth
exiles in England, still individuals.	IV CHORUS of oppressed Scottish exiles, standing together as a unified entity.
V Sleepwalking scene	Sleepwalking scene
final battle at Inverness - Macbeth's castle.	final battle at Macbeth's castle. CHORUS of victory, lauding Macduff as the saviour of his king (Malcolm - divine sovereign) and his country.

APPENDIX

Budden added the following footnote to the conclusion of his discussion of Macbeth.

One curious feature of Macbeth--unparalleled in any other of Verdi's operas apart from Il Trovatore--is the use of key, not architectonically, but for purposes of dramatic definition. Perhaps one should speak of 'areas of pitch' rather than keys, since both the modes are included, while the relation of one 'area' to another is not exploited. Three are of special importance: F major/minor which belongs to Macbeth himself; A major/minor which denotes the outside world, including the witches; D flat major which is associated with the idea of murder. There are two subsidiary areas: E connoting power and B flat escape. Against this more or less constant background the dramatic events spring all the more vividly into relief. Note how the idea of murder first insinuates itself into Macbeth's mind in the form of D flat major against the prevailing F major of the duettino in Act I; how Lady Macbeth's cavatina proceeds from an andante in D flat to a cabaletta in E major--i.e. from the idea of murder to that of power; how the unequivocal E major of the Act II finale is shaken by jagged rhythms as though Macbeth's newly acquired power were already tottering. Whether such a scheme was adopted by Verdi consciously we cannot be sure. But it is significant that the 1847 ending in which Macbeth dies on stage is in F minor, while the new finale of 1865 is in A major.¹

For the same reason that Budden footnoted the observation rather than including it in the main body of his text, it is appended in this work. It could be important but lacks sufficient substantiation to be included in the main text.

¹Budden, The Operas of Verdi, p. 312.

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