

The Merchants of *Macbeth*: Strategies for Selling Students Shares in the Play

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I am going to begin this paper with a couple of basic premises. First, if you teach, you *are* an educative merchant. Take it from an old used car salesman—everyone is incessantly selling something (we are, minimally, always selling ourselves). And teaching is about the fine and applied art of literary merchandising. It's true—we all have material to peddle. We care about that material, and about the peddling. As a college teacher who offers lots of upper-level courses in the novel, Shakespeare, and Humanities topics, I rely on my sales reputation—whether my former customers had a “profitable, productive” experience with me; whether their time with me was “well-spent”; whether they “got something out of it.” And I've learned that I'd better be attentive to what my customers want and need or my market will dry up. Customers may not come to some of my courses (a number of them are electives) unless I advertise, promote, and enthusiastically persuade them to “buy in.”

All of us know that administrators think about the teaching enterprise in this way, and that they've come to think of students

as “consumers”—I run a very small interdisciplinary Humanities program, and it's all about numbers to those administrators. “Are your Humanities courses maximizing FTE, Professor Dyer?” If not—particularly in these terrible economic times when under-producing programs are being targeted and the “retrenchment” word is being openly bandied about—foreclosure could be imminent.

But students think this way, too. They want to know what's in it for them. They are skeptical investors of their time, attention, and effort, in many cases (not all)—unless you can convince them that they *need* what you're selling, that what you're selling is essential to who they are and want to be, and that, for very little money down, you can put them securely in the driver's seat of the skills or books you're selling. I'm not at all demeaning what I do by calling it selling. But there's no denying it. And those who teach at the middle and high school levels get that lesson pounded into them while fulfilling the requirements of “No Behind Left Behind” and the testing that comes with it, during which they find out, rightly or wrongly, whether their students have bought what they tried to sell them and, if not, what the cost will be to their school for selling short.

Now that I've engaged consumerism in the teaching enterprise, I want to focus on three strategies for effecting a student buy-in of *Macbeth*.¹ If you are a high school teacher with a *Macbeth* unit on this year's syllabus, you're probably smirking at that last sentence. “Buying *Macbeth*, Dyer?” you exclaim. “Why, my school has been distributing the same worn paper-back copies of the play to students for twenty-five years! There's no ‘buying’ about it. To choose another text would cost me a lot of my own money out-of-pocket.”

What I'm referring to, though, is the selling of a new *Macbeth* that has always been lurking within the language of that old paper-back and that your students can help you to release. The strategies of that process of collaborative emancipation?—some

1 Evans, Baker, et al., eds., *Macbeth*, in *The Riverside Shakespeare* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1974). All subsequent references to the play will be made to this edition, designated by *M.act.scene.line* numbers.

practical and intentional identification and application of what students already know about the complex and scary world that impinges upon them every day; what an “historical moment” is; and how our students’ confident awareness of the technology of hypertext can help them open up a play that has always been there. In the end, I’m talking about a more constructivist approach to the play, some reading and doing that partakes of an unequal admixture of historicism and reader response.

I. Travels with Arthur

Everyone has a mentor. Professor Arthur Kinney, the Thomas W. Copeland Professor of Literary History and Director of the Center for Renaissance Studies at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, is mine. Period. Our relationship extends back to a renaissance literature course I took from Arthur in just my second semester of M.A./Ph.D. work at UMass-Amherst in the spring of 1971. His generosity with his time and intellectual gifts are what most impressed me about him.

When I click on the “Arthur” link in my brain, lots of vivid moments come alive. The long counseling sessions when he wasn’t yet my adviser. The midnight informal coaching a few hours before my oral qualifying exam. The allaying of my flop sweat at having forgotten all I’d studied in preparation for my oral comprehensives. His gentle scolding in the dining room of the Lord Jeff after my successful dissertation defense for not having asked him to chair my committee (he was correct). The use of his house and library during two summers when I participated in NEH seminars in Amherst. And his advice for me to be confident through a year’s worth of conflicting and brutal three-reader reviews before my work was finally accepted for publication in one of the most important periodicals in renaissance scholarship—the journal that Arthur founded and still edits, *English Literary Renaissance*. Arthur was for me what he was, as a matter of course, for all his students. It’s what we all hope to be for ours.

But I recall a “Macbeth” moment with Arthur twenty-two years ago, the full importance of which didn’t occur to me until

last year. In that spring of 1987, ten years away from Amherst, I was in the middle of a “Shakespeare’s Tragedies” course at Minnesota State University, Mankato. My students and I were hip-deep in *King Lear* when I placed a call to Arthur to ask him if he might have the time and interest to come to Mankato to talk to my students about *Shakespeare*. Arthur said he’d love to; it just so happened that he had a one-day window of opportunity. He had been scheduled to deliver a lecture on *Macbeth* to the History faculty at the University of Minnesota on a Thursday in March, and he’d stay with me and my family if I could be counted on to ferry him to that lecture and then to the airport the next day.

As it turned out, Arthur generously agreed to come, and, for the mere \$100 that the English Department was able to pay him, spent an hour talking to my students about *Lear*, delivered a formal presentation on *Macbeth* to the English faculty and their students, and then hosted an informal gathering at my house that evening, giving students the rare chance to interact with a scholar of international reputation, a member of many editorial boards, and a writer and editor of more than thirty books.

About a week away from my own pedagogical flailings with *Macbeth*, I was grateful to be able to hear what he was working on. I knew well his great range as a renaissance literary historian,² and I’d studied what he’d written about More, Erasmus, Sidney, and wonderful inventions in the pre-16th century English novel by Greene, Nash, Gascoigne, Lodge, and Deloney, but I knew little of his work with Shakespeare. There wasn’t sufficient time for Arthur to connect all of the primary

2 The list of Arthur F. Kinney’s works in renaissance literature, both English and continental, is long and diverse. These include *Humanist Poetics: Thought, Rhetoric, and Fiction in Sixteenth Century England* (Amherst: UMass Press, 1986); *Continental Humanist Poetics: Studies in Erasmus, Castiglione, Marguerite de Navarre, Rabelais, and Cervantes* (Amherst: UMass Press, 1989); *Sidney in Retrospect: Selections for English Literary Renaissance* (Amherst: UMass Press, 1988); *Shakespeare’s Webs: Networks of Meaning in Renaissance Drama* (New York: Routledge, 2004); *Shakespeare and Cognition: Aristotle’s Legacy and Shakespearean Drama: Webbing the Invisible* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

source dots to the historicist puzzle pieces he outlined for his audience—Mary’s controversial Scottish reign, flight, and arrest; the strict Presbyterian influences that shaped the mind of her son and successor James; the political in-fightings, kidnappings, and murders that isolated James, made him fearful of assassination throughout his life, created a paranoid and vengeful spirit in him, and drove some of his enthusiasms against his perceived enemies (the Berwick witch trials and James’ inquisitions and orchestrations of some of the torture; his belief that the Devil’s spirits co-existed with us, sought constantly to destroy Christian souls, and needed to be rooted out); James’ ambition to succeed Queen Elizabeth; the Powder Plot and the long-standing “Catholic Threat” against the integrity of the English state; and the crop failures and inflationary pressures that threatened the economy.

He mostly talked about the vortex of events that surrounded the text of *Macbeth*, making several allusions to the language in the play to suggest what he saw were equivocal connections to some of these events. No time for a *prima facie* case. What did Shakespeare know and when did he know it? We would never possess a definite answer to that question, said Arthur. But all the more reason, he said, to know “the moment” that surrounded the construction and performance of the play if, as Arthur believed (about all authors, not just Shakespeare), a literary text like *Macbeth* is both shaped by and shapes the patterns of discourse (official and popular; public and private) that co-exist in that “moment.”

I was intrigued. Could, as Arthur seemed to be suggesting, Shakespeare have intended a more subversive reading of his play to an audience that would have included King James? I’d had been courting a hunch that this smallest of Shakespeare’s plays carried a message much more complex than a simple compliment to James. It *had* to. All of those insistent “fairs and foul.” A play structure so deliberately anti-climactic. A play presenting such a puzzle in its central character—one so demonstrably proficient, loyal, competent, decisive, and yet one who out-Hamlets Hamlet in his waverings and imaginative flights, and so seemingly aware

that to act on the near-tangible constructions of his imagination will grease the slippery slope to an evil-doing doom. A man who clearly loves his wife, and she him. And a cast of characters, a natural environment, and dramatic language that reverse all expectations about an underlying moral order

For a good part of the following day, my job was to chauffeur Arthur to the University of Minnesota, where he delivered a much more formal and polished forty-five minute version of the historicist discussion he’d carried on with me and my students. It went well. More information this time, as I recall—this time, on the spurious “history” in Holinshed from which Shakespeare had drawn as well as deviated in significant ways (details defining the relationship between Macbeth and Banquo; the question of Duncan as a “good” but weak king, who may have killed that weak king, and why), as well as the early intellectual and disciplinary and religious influences on James, if not his Catholic mother, who was, more than likely involved in at least one murder. Good stuff. Again, only a few allusions about these events made to the play. Teasers. Hints. Suggestions.

II. Post-Arthurian Studies—From Arthur’s Idea of “The Historical Moment” to Mine

Arthur was on a plane back to Amherst early the next morning. Although I’d spend several weeks with him in the summer of 1987 while doing an NEH Summer Institute at UMass, I wouldn’t see him again. No opportunities. A growing family. And Arthur’s summers—besides his editorial work for *ELR*—were always spent in residence at Oxford to continue his historicist studies of European renaissance texts. But over those twenty intervening years, I’d read his books, taught Shakespeare every year, and ruminated over what to make of *Macbeth*. And the seeds that Arthur had planted in my mind about *Macbeth*—that there was no authoritative text to hang one’s interpretive hat on, that the play seemed more like a shell of unfinished possibilities than a finished play (maybe, even, a play that read jaggedly, almost as if parts had been removed, or, rather, as if I were reading a skeletal text meant for the flexibility of actual

performance—there’s an idea—the text of which would accrete or shrink depending upon the audience response from the previous performance and the prevailing direction and intensity of the political winds)—were still growing. I’d come out of thirty years of teaching Shakespeare’s plays knowing one thing: that each play, particularly the tragedies, was intentionally allusive/elusive. No direct answers. Only questions. Equivocations. Blind alleys. No totalizing ideological hooks to comfort the reader.

Why was that? Because of the uncertain and fluxful world that Shakespeare lived in? Because of a fragile economic set of variables that made the practice of Shakespeare’s craft and professional theatrical enterprise a daily crap shoot? Because Shakespeare was a “closet Catholic” working within a culture in which practicing Jews had long ago been expelled from England and in which Catholics were believed to be in league with Spain, France, the Pope, and the Jesuits to reinstate Catholicism in England? Because to speak straight out about a set of issues within a police state in which a secret espionage unit operated and torture was regularly inflicted to root out political and religious subversives who plotted terrorist acts against the state? Because Shakespeare had to submit all of his work before a state censor before it could be publicly performed? Absolutely.

I’d talked about a lot of this stuff *to* but *not with* my students, mostly because it was messy and uncertain to ask them to help me confirm the relative importance of some of these variables. Besides, I’d probably fallen in love with my own voice. And it was simply easier and quicker; my undergraduate Shakespeare courses consume a mere half-semester apiece—no time, too much to do, so many textual places to go.

But that changed in the spring of 2009. Scott Hall, my collaborator in other Shakespeare teaching gambits at Irondale High School (and present as a student on that day in 1987 when Arthur had visited my Shakespeare class) suggested that we try to engage his 11th-grade students in *Macbeth*. We’d need first to do what we always did—re-read the play closely and repeatedly, to the point of near-memorization. We’d need to know where everything was in the play, including the emerging patterns of

language and imagery that drove its thematics. This would be the best part—having a partner to regularly argue over parts of the play, wring out meaning and allusion through continuing discussion. The discovery process. Seeing and hearing things about a play that each of us had taught over decades for the very first time.

Scott enriched our interactions with articles on consumerist theory he’d been reading, and he was right—the issue of consumerism and cultural materialism was all over Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*, right from the get-go with Shakespeare’s three vagrant bag ladies shopping for body parts on the periphery of a battle field and invoking vengeful spells against those who won’t share their chesnuts. Small potatoes. No real power, perhaps, but the power of suggestion (like Shakespeare’s poetry!). The ability to draw a full investment of Macbeth’s belief in their suggestions, supported only by coincidence and chance. Speculations on profit and loss reverberate through the play from first to last. And Scott would prepare for his and my engagement with his students and the play by introducing consumerist theory and working toward some concrete understandings of how it drove the action and relationships within the play.

The plan devolved into a one-day guest shot by me in front of two classes of Scott’s 11th-graders. Almost worse than no time at all, I felt, because I’d have a mere 55 minutes per each class to sell them. They’d read the play and talked about the witches and the family Macbeth; they’d not seen a filmed version of the play yet, for which I was grateful—I’d have a greater opportunity of playing on their imaginations about what they *might* see in a production staged within Shakespeare’s time. And they were on the verge of discussing the darkly-comic “Porter” scene of 2.3. But it was a Friday in April; all of their thoughts were on the prom they’d all be attending on Saturday night. I’d have to be quick about it, and try to use what was upper-most in their minds. I’d need to get them to talk.

I’d decided to plant my flag on three related issues: (1) a little on Shakespeare’s theatre company, and the question of whether Scott’s students believed that they could be a part of

that company's audience, or, even, a member of the company; (2) a little on their "historical moments" and what such moments might mean to them, with a little writing and connecting; and (3) a little on whether *their* "moments" could conceivably illuminate the "historical moment" of *Macbeth* that Shakespeare (and—I'd have to believe he hoped—his audience) carried within his mind.

Lots could be said again about what I've already written about Shakespeare's theatre company. But they always need to be said in order to bring Shakespeare into *our* reality. First and foremost, Shakespeare was a working playwright, I told them. None of what we have of his would have ever happened if he wasn't concerned about making a living for himself, for his fellow householders, and for the other actors, apprentices, musicians, tiring house workers, and the rest of the company's supporting cast. This was a tough, competitive life he'd chosen. Lots of theatre companies for competition, but never any more than five companies operating at any one time. Others dropping by the wayside. There were, certainly, many theatres on the south bank of London by the mid 1590s—the Rose, the Curtain, the Swan, the Fortune, the Hope, soon the Globe—but those seats had to be filled, that open space before the stage in the yard occupied, maybe six times each week during a season that began in September, continued intermittently after the Christmas holidays until Lent (and some performances even then) and ended when the hot weather that carried the plague arrived. Maybe as many as 2500 to 3000 spaces.³ Furthermore, there were 32 to 36 people who depended upon those occupied spaces.

This was a business enterprise. Show business. To be crass, Shakespeare and the rest of his company's householders—and this was certainly true of Philip Henslowe⁴, that tight-fisted

3 Peter Thomson, in his *Shakespeare's Theatre* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985), counts 818 in the yard and about 1526 in the galleries of the Globe. 24.

4 Thomson makes an important point about Henslowe's undeniable concerns about the "bottom line" in relation to his competitors: "... Henslowe's interest in theatre is irrefutable evidence of its profitability as commerce. He was a businessman, and not an over-scrupulous one....'there is little justification for drawing a contrast between Henslowe, as a mercenary

owner of the Rose Theatre and several whore houses in the neighborhood) were flesh-peddlars. In it to make money.

No art for art's sake here; art was the uncanny by-product (not all of the time) of a repertory system in which a play never ran two days in succession over a period of four to six months during which that play would be produced eight to twelve times. This system was driven by a set of commercial realities that included leading actors like Burbage needing to hold in their heads, in a three-year period, fifty new parts while retaining an additional twenty old ones; one in which a company actor mastered a new role every week while remembering another 30-40 more.⁵ Even during James I's reign, when only two companies were formerly registered to operate (there were lots of unregistered companies),⁶ theatre companies were commercial enterprises in which a resident playwright like Shakespeare could write plays that would pay the playwright a small fee and the company the profits from performing it (there'd be "benefit nights" when all the receipts would be Shakespeare's).⁷ But the company couldn't rely on the output of a resident playwright—the Kings' Men wouldn't have. They would have had to invest in the purchase of other plays, the ability to reprise old plays in their repertory to boost their revenues—these plays would represent a company's most valuable commercial assets.

capitalist, and the Burbages; the evidence suggests that they were all capitalists." 28.

5 See Thomas, 57. "...a leading actor, Thomas Downton of the Admiral's Men for example, might have had fifty sizeable parts in new plays between 1594 and 1597, as well as twenty in revivals of such old favourites as *Doctor Faustus* and *Tamburlaine*....it was not the custom in Elizabethan London to present the same play on successive afternoons." And Kinney expands a bit on the unfolding of the repertory and the number of plays that actors, by necessity, had to master. *Lies Like Truth: Shakespeare, Macbeth, and the Cultural Moment* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2001), 71.

6 In *Lies Like Truth*, Kinney notes this: "By 1600 the Privy Council had licensed two public theatres (the Fortune and the Globe); other companies staged plays at the Rose, the Boar's Head, and the Curtain; and boys companies performed at St. Paul's and Blackfriars." 69.

7 Thomson speculates that there was a "strong possibility that he was allowed all the takings on a second-day benefit performance of each of his new plays." 34.

A final point—Shakespeare would have known that *Macbeth* would possess the very stuff to be performed at court—a piece of high theatre (the physical situating of James, his Danish brother-in-law and head of state, and his wife, raised upon a high dais in the very center of the viewing area that surely would have spoiled the view of many in the audience and would have complicated the question of which spectacle was the central one). One thing is certain—if the audience carried *anything* of the current political and religious situation in their frontal lobes and if Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* carried to them even a suggestion of those things (there’s that word “suggestion” again—playwriting as a kind of fine and applied witchcraft!), the audience would have found it impossible not to see the performance of kingship-under-siege in *Macbeth* juxtaposed against that other monarchical presence.⁸ Spectacle. Eye-candy in the form of thought that I’d quickly and dirtily delivered to Scott’s students not willing to suffer fools like me kindly.

But what of the audience? And what of the theatre company members mounting the production? Would it have been possible to situate Scott’s students in either or both groups back in 1606? I asked *them* these questions.⁹ Since I’d have almost no time to dimensionalize their responses, I had to parlay them into some broad cultural brush strokes. The short answer?—no presence on the stage for our young women, but lots of opportunities to be in the Globe to see the show. And there wouldn’t have been a member of either of our two thirty-member classes who couldn’t have been there. This was, after all, the most popular form of

8 Kinney, in *Lies Like Truth*, notes what would become the conventional expectation for accommodating James I during Royal performances: “At royal performances the best seats were those offering not the best sight lines of the play but the best view of the King; the royal party sat on a raised dais and under a canopy....Royal performances thus continually realized James’s advice to Prince Henry in the *Basilicon Doron* that the prince is always one sitting on a stage for people to behold and admire. This would have been true at royal performances of *Macbeth*, too, where James would be a second king in the sight line toward Duncan, Macbeth, or Malcolm.” 71.

9 See my discussion of the composition of the Elizabethan audience and theatre company in Hall’s and Dyer’s “Stepping off a Small Cliff: Going Back to Ninth Grade with *Romeo and Juliet*” (MEJ.48.2006).

entertainment in town, the Elizabethan version of TV, except with live audiences and even fresher performances enlivened by the sounds and smells of the Thames and the Southbank environs. The heterogeneity of the audience—one out of every eight Londoners went to at least one production per year¹⁰—was incredible, a true cross-section of London culture. And, as for people as young as Scott’s students, they could be there as young apprentices or haberdashers or goldsmiths or glovers or shipwrights or dyers or carpenters; maids-in-waiting attending to their aristocratic female charges in the upper galleries; drawers on holiday from a tavern or hostelry, stable boys employed at local inns, day laborers, touts, pick-pockets elbowing through the pit, prostitutes, boatmen, young soldiers, young daughters and sons of moneylenders, merchants, and shopkeepers—even young courtiers or aspiring gentlemen from wealthy families (Thomson 24).¹¹ The only requirement?—a penny for admission, and then more pennies for the pleasure of being seated prominently or discreetly.

The prospect of these 11th-graders being *in* or involved in the staging of *Macbeth* depended, I told them after fielding their more tentative responses, on their gender. But, that big qualifier notwithstanding, they could have been among the speculative six to nine young people who entered and grew within the company as apprentice actors, stage hands, costume menders, gatherers.¹² Boys from twelve to nineteen would have been hired

10 Thomson indicates attendance “had risen to 18,000 by 1601, and to 21,000 by 1605.” 30.

11 Thomson provides some specific information on the nature and diversity of Shakespeare’s audience. And then there’s this: “It is the recognition of a common urge that leads Martin Holmes to the assertion that ‘practically every playgoer of consequence was a business man.’ The merchant would have been likely to bring a small (family) group...” (25).

12 See Thomson (24) and this from Martha Fletcher Bellinger in *A Short History of the Theatre* (New York: Henry Holt and Co, 1927, in www.theatrehistory.com/british/bellinger001/html): “The house itself was not unlike a circus, with a good deal of noise and dirt. Servants, grooms, ‘prentices and mechanics jostled each other in the pit, while more or less gay companies filled the boxes. Women of respectability were few, yet sometimes they did attend; and if they were careful of their reputations they wore masks. On the stage, which ran far into the auditorium, would be seated a few of the early

in as stage boys, helpers in the tiring room, and assisters of the musicians, perhaps, after gaining some experience, moving into more important tasks in the company. Scott's 16 year-olds would have been too old to play the incredibly astute little son of Macduff, wise beyond his years, who would be dispatched so violently at the end of 4.2, or even Banquo's son Fleance who appears and then disappears in a flash after Banquo's murder in 3.2. But, if they'd been with the company for three or four years of their apprenticeship, they very well could have been recruited to play a character like him in an earlier production. My point?—Shakespeare was dealing them *in* to the play, expecting to see them seated, expecting them to see themselves in the production, expecting them to understand what they were seeing and to know that Shakespeare wasn't writing language or scenes that intentionally excluded them. Of course, because this was public theatre, *spectacle* was *all*. A visual feast of rich costumes and pageantry replete with musical accompaniment; ritualized "dumb shows" using gesture and physical movement that thematize the issue of "play" to drive character and theme, like the final encounter of Macbeth with the witches in 3.5 and the high theatre that his imagination and their verbal promptings conspire to create; violent scenes punctuated with blood leaking from punctured goats' bladders.

This is theatre! This stuff is all about the creation of physical images of sensational proportions to move an audience already used to the violent pleasures of cock fights and bear-baitings. And that concern for spectacle and the use of play as a contemporary mirror continued into the reign of King James. James had made some determinations based on his own theatrical temperament and interests. Two official theatre companies. One of those companies sponsored by him, the King's Men. And the spectacle? Think no further than the masque-like *The Tempest* of 1611, which seems so entirely about play, special effects, dance, song, the creation of illusions and their machinery; the wild "Storm Scene" of 3.2 in *Lear* in which Lear invites Nature

gallants, playing cards, smoking, waited upon by their pages; and sometimes eating nuts or apples and throwing things out among the crowd."

to disintegrate into atomic chaos; the cross-continental collision of the pomp and fantasy of Egypt with the cold pragmatism of Octavius in *Antony and Cleopatra*; and the witches of *Macbeth*, who are, as history tells us, provided by Shakespeare with the machinery to fly.¹³ There's no business like show business during James' reign.

I knew that Scott's students knew about spectacle. Hell, I reminded them that they were about to contribute to the formal spectacle of their prom on Saturday night! The rented tuxes; the gowns worn but a single time; the expensive dinner out; the limos; the corsages; the formal entrances and receiving line and grand march, perhaps, that they'd perform to their parents' flashing cameras. But I needed them to buy fully *in* to the importance of spectacle in their daily lives in order to understand why "theatrical spectacle" was important to Shakespeare and his audience in more ways than just in his plays.

III. "That Magic Moment" and the Second Coming of Arthur—Tapping into What Students Know Now in Order to Know 1606

All but half of my fifty-five minutes with Scott's students were gone now. To get them to a glimmer of an awareness of what an "historical moment" could be for them and for Shakespeare, I asked them to tell me what "hypertext" is and how it works. No problem. I'd hit the majority of them right where they live. They couldn't wait to tell me what they knew better than I.

And they *knew*. "Links," they said confidently. "Those live links within the text of a document on a page on the net," another kicked in. "You can read over and beyond it," said yet another, "if the link doesn't interest you." But what if it does, I asked? "Just

¹³ Kinney notes an interesting connection between Thomas Middleton's *The Witch* (1610) and *Macbeth* in terms of machinery that they most likely shared: "Andrew Gurr has suggested that the elaborate and expensive machinery built at the Blackfriars for the witches to fly in Middleton's play had been so expensive that, to cut their loses, Shakespeare's company used the machinery in subsequent productions of *Macbeth*. This would have provided considerable spectacle and, like the porter's scene, relieved tension in the main plot in performance." 283.

click on it, open it, and it will send you to another location—maybe to an entirely different site on the web, where you can read info that defines the link.” And what if you encounter other links within that document you’re reading, I asked? What’s the relation between the stuff in those links and the document you’re reading? “Everything and nothing,” a grinning young man in the back row offered. “All of those links within any given document let you read the document from front to back—or *not*,” he suggested. “If you follow all the links, you may never get back to that original document,” he said. “You can read sideways, in a circle, back-and-forth between the original document and the stuff in the links,” he added. No rules—just right. Serendipity. A series of panes opening, all of them connected loosely and by relative distance to the subject matter of the original document, by both intentional and random electronic impulses. A bricolage of opened panes representing an electronic super-highway through the communication of the electronic impulses of our brain to the electronic impulses on our laptop. Exactly, I told them.

I didn’t tell them this, but I’d discovered an early 19th century version of hypertext in Jane Austen’s *Emma*. Austen had engineered the narration of the book so brilliantly that she was able to tell most of the story through the limited and flawed perspective of Emma while peppering her narrative with what amounted to hypertextual “links” (little hints, clues, suggestions—there’s that word again) to what Emma, through her mistaken belief in her own intellectual superiority, was blind to. All of those links—Frank Churchill’s supposed irresponsible riding off to London for a haircut; the mysterious appearance of a piano for Jane; the embarrassing comments Frank shared with Emma about Jane’s diffidence; Emma’s misinterpretation of who Frank was actually confessing his affection for in their close conversations; what it might mean for Jane to be checking her mailbox when she ought to have been home nursing her cold—all of these “links” and dozens more have been enlivened by the author to lead the attentive reader to Frank’s letter to Emma near the end of the narrative, and Knightly’s confession of the depths

of his heretofore-hidden love for Emma. Austen’s “sub-text” of the novel, always available to the reader, as we find out near the end, with the click of a “link”. I felt fairly full of myself when, in an English novel course in 1999, I explained my “hypertext” analysis of the novel and distributed a two-page hand-out with a list of all of Austen’s “links” in *Emma*.

But this is where my mentor Arthur enters once again. Independently of any knowledge of the small discovery I’d used the metaphor of “hypertext” to make with Austen, Arthur published a book on *Macbeth* that represented a culmination of the work—he’d shared merely the seeds of that work with me and my students during his visit to Mankato in 1987—he’d been doing on the play and its cultural context. The name of the book that came out in 2001?—*Lies like Truth: Shakespeare, Macbeth, and the Cultural Moment*.¹⁴ He was still plying his historicist angle on the play, but with an important wrinkle. He’d engaged the metaphor of hypertext as a means for refining what constituted a “cultural moment.” What is our mind if not a vast “web” of associated and electronically hyperlinked connectors? Tiny dendrites and neurons and axionic sacs of common information that, like the internet, are invisible until we “click” on them,¹⁵ continue to expand exponentially as we speak, and can operate with a speed that exceeds what computers are capable of (certainly the one I’m currently working with!).

A thought—often unsummoned—appears on our mental web page. We think through that thought until a word or an association stimulates us to click on that link and fly instantaneously to a *new page* that will open with info that, until that instant, had been *invisible* but had always been there. We think it, and (unless our mental machine is old, abused, and been dropped to the floor a few times, like mine) it’s there. Then there’ll be

¹⁴ I’ve cited this text by Kinney several times already. However, from this point, all subsequent references to it will occur simply as *LLT* plus page number.

¹⁵ Note Kinney’s fascinating technical discussion of the connection of the neural pathways of the brain to the complexities of hypertext in *LLT*.32-37.

a series of successively specific links, or links that cause us to move in a parallel direction, or links that enable us to exit that web page and enter other public spaces for information that goes way beyond our own local information, stuff that others have found, links we've stored information in that allow us to pick and choose, to read our world selectively.¹⁶ It's all in our marvelous mental computers. Nothing is ever lost in them, in spite of injury or self-abuse or age that may have deactivated or made balky some of those links. Some have said that we're now using only five percent of the potential power in our brains. Imagine the hypertextual possibilities.

Remember that reprehensible public service commercial about the egg frying in the pan and the voice-over that intones "this is your mind on drugs"? Well, *this* is the hypertext of our minds responding to the resonances and textures and suggestions (there it is again!) of a significant cultural happening. Arthur sees the historical moment that Shakespeare's *Macbeth* occupies as a long one. It encompasses James' early days in Scotland under rigorous Presbyterian tutors, James' mother Mary's crazy and compromising private and political escapades (shades of Lady Macbeth¹⁷)—some of them most likely murderous—that end in her conviction and execution; Elizabeth's death; James' accession and month-long progress from Scotland toward London,

16 This goes right to the point of Kinney's work in historicism and cultural materials. The cultural moment is fluid, present, historical, and projecting into the future: "Whatever *Macbeth* meant in 1606, then, was richly complicated and not always easily, or perhaps ever wholly, recoverable; it would surely go beyond what any current production or even textbook was providing or any recent treatise such as that connecting the play to the Powder Plot or to witchcraft. Such an understanding would need to recover the cultural moment which, as Howard Felperin has pointed out, is 'laden with the traces of earlier and the latencies of subsequent moments,' and it would have accommodated, as Clifford Geertz has warned, 'a situation at once fluid, plural, uncentered, and ineradicably untidy.'" *LLT*.13-14.

17 Kinney uses excerpts from Buchanan's *Detection Mariae Reginae Scotorum* to draw the parallel between James' mother Queen Mary and Lady Macbeth in her active use of Bothwell to assassinate Darnley, father of the future James I, a pay-back for the murder of Riccio. As Buchanan notes, gunpowder was used to blow up the house in which Darnley slept, an eerie precursor of the 1605 Powder Plot. 51-52.

during which he bought loyalties at great expense; the "Powder Plot"¹⁸ and Father Henry Garnet's torture, trial, and public execution; a devastating series of crop failures and a wicked inflationary cycle;¹⁹ Spanish Armadas—not just the 1588 one, but the ones in 1592, 1595, 1596, and others threatened, all ultimately unsuccessful (*LLT*.63); a ridiculously spend-thrift royal court during a time when such extravagance could least be afforded;²⁰ the spectre of an unpopular king's fiscal irresponsibility which

18 Kinney represents an excerpt from the *Calendar of State Papers, Venetian*, 10:285, written by the Venetian ambassador in England to his own government, that considerably complicates a possible motive for the government's delay in acting on certain evidence that the plot was "on" (particularly, as Kinney notes, since Fawkes was discovered with only "a single small keg" of gunpowder: "The principal business before Parliament is the granting a subsidy, which the King greatly desires, but it is generally supposed that he will meet with serious difficulties, and that it will be refused: for many members openly declare that as there is no war with Spain, no war in Holland, no army on the Scottish border—which they say cost the late Queen upwards of a million a year in gold—they cannot understand why the king, who has the revenues of Scotland, should want money. They add that the people are far more heavily burdened than under the late Queen, for the King stays so continually and so long in the country, where the peasants are obliged to furnish beasts and wagons for transporting the Court from place to place, and whenever he goes a-hunting the crops are mostly ruined. Further the Court is far larger than in the late Queen's time, and the peasants are forced to supply provisions at low prices, which is an intolerable burden." 122-23.

19 Kinney cites and quotes Roger B. Manning in *Village Revolts: Social Protest and Popular Disturbances in England, 1509-1640* on the dire economic situation: "...a number of crises in the years around 1606 'were characterized by a sequence of harvest failures, dearth, and food riots, as well as unemployment in the clothing trades; anti-enclosure riots occurred more frequently, and the government became more fearful of the problem of vagrants and masterless men. An epidemic of apprentices' riots, lasting nearly two decades, disturbed the peace of London, normally a well-governed city.'" And, as Kinney states, by 1599 "the bottom fell out of the wheat market." And, by 1606, "the farmer who raised an abundance of grain the year *Macbeth* was performed, then, could be in serious straits." 130-31.

20 "Plague in London precluded immediate coronation, which was postponed, as things turned out, to March 15, 1604. In the meantime, on July 17, the new King performed another surprising act: he issued a general summons offering knighthood to all persons who had 40 pounds a year in land, either to come and receive the honor or to compound with the King's commissioners: like Shakespeare's Duncan and Malcolm, he attempted to secure rule (and revenues) through awarding titles. Creative in raising money, he spent it lavishly." *LLT*.78.

included the creation of new titles and the buying of peerages (*LLT.79*) to build political alliances that would force the parliament to close and cultivate the seeds for a civil war that would cost his son his head. Depending upon how you do the math, that “cultural moment” could encompass numberless hypertextual links within the span of between 26 and 66 years. *Voila!*—the radical redefinition of how any of us look at a moment. Post-modernists would be proud.

This is the way Arthur describes the exploding cultural moment surrounding *Macbeth* in 1606. And it rings true to us. Nothing could be more “material” than hypertext. Hit a link and a whole legion of informational particles appears on the screen related to that topic. Sometimes, it’s intellectual room service, and our students know that. The online reader-written and edited encyclopedia that is *WIKIPEDIA*, with its embedded layers of information that surround and dimensionalize (often without citations of reliable sources!) is too often exactly that.

As Arthur suggests, it’s ever so possible (no, inescapable) for an astute observer of his environment, a sponge of topicalities drawn from his contemporary environment with an intention to fill those damned seats and harvest an overflowing cash box, a pursuer of his own material advantages, and a reader with diverse interests²¹ to be able to hold in his mind (just as *you* and *I* do) the stuff of a plummeting economy and housing and futures markets (corn and wheat in Shakespeare’s case), the partisan clamorings over a bitterly-fought election after a devastating few years of war and presidential incompetence (a new and controversial king and policies, in Shakespeare’s case), the widening gap between the haves and have-nots (with preferential treatment toward the former, true also in Shakespeare’s and James’ time), and the official repression and stigmatizing of a major world religion (Catholicism, in Shakespeare’s case, which

21 Kinney and many, many others have documented Shakespeare’s deep interest in the law and his engagement of it, in many ways, in his plays. For a very solid academic discussion of this subject, see the “Shakespeare and the law” page of the Shakespeare Fellowship (www.shakespearefellowship.org/virtualclassroom/Law.htm).

Shakespeare and his family may still have harbored secret loyalties toward) but *also* express them in obvious and not so obvious ways in his play.

IV. From Theory to Practice—What One Needs to Get This Show on the Road

And *that*, for my last fifteen minutes with Scott’s students, is where my quizzing them on the nature of their own “historical moment” became the center of our very brief interaction. I asked them to take five minutes to respond to this writing prompt:

I want you to tell me what you REMEMBER about the MOMENT of “9-11”.

Your recollections, your impressions. Where were you? What did you see? How did you see it? What did you say and do? What kinds of impressions of that day have you brought along with you from that moment? What kinds of impressions of your world did you bring with you that day when you saw what you saw? What kinds of impressions *after* the *event* of “9-11” do you automatically connect with it?

Now, first of all, both Scott and I had been very skeptical about using this prompt on them. As near as my defective math skills could calculate, these kids would have been either eight or nine when the planes struck the World Trade Center. What could they have possibly seen or remembered at that age? Wouldn’t they have been sheltered from what I remember seeing? And how could an eight year-old’s emotional reaction to events that may have meant nothing at the time have approximated mine? Scott had said he’d feel them out on “9-11,” even show a filmed documentary on it to them, as an entrée to my visit. Maybe that was cheating—all I wanted was to hit that hyperlink in their individual heads labeled “9-11”, see if it was a “live link”, and, if it was, track some of the circuitry of it, the panes that it opened, and the relative sharpness and specificity of the details that opening the link brought up on their mental screens.

The result was really quite stunning. When it came time to share what they’d written—with no requirement that they

air it out to the class—their responses came quickly, sharply, respectfully, and thoughtfully. They remembered the monitors in their classrooms being on; looking at the clock and seeing 9:30 when the second plane struck the second building; listening to their principal come on the intercom to offer a calming explanation and consolation; their feelings of desperation and helplessness; the silence.

And one young woman, an immigrant from Asia whom Scott characterized as very bright but also reticent to speak, put her hand up toward me in response to my question, “anyone else want to share their experience?” She clearly and quietly told a story that absolutely riveted the attention of every person in that class. She’d been there. In mid-town Manhattan. She was nine on that morning, attending an international school not a half-mile away from “ground zero”, when the buildings had begun to collapse. She remembers her and her fellow students being hustled out of the building, the deafening noise on the street, and, stealing a quick look behind her as her teachers hurried the children out and away from the disaster, the huge billows of blinding ash mushrooming from the ground and rushing up the street after them.

Powerful. As were some of the quick connections they made to their sense of what they associated with the event before it happened and things after it that they couldn’t think of without thinking of “9-11.” But, in the fever of the few moments we had left, I asked them to consider a few things as they continued their discussions about *Macbeth* and how it might be about *them*. First, I wanted them never to forget that what I’d asked them to remember was *spectacle*. High and carefully planned, intentional *theatre*. Street theatre. The theatre of terror, designed to elicit a set of specific emotional responses from a very specific cultural audience. Replete with props and setting of iconic dimensions. It worked. We’ll never forget it. The moment lives far beyond that act of theatre. And it extends backward before that theatre spectacle occurred—other acts of terror, the first World Trade Center bombings, the first Gulf War, Glassnost and the tearing-down of the Berlin wall, the hostage-takings and humiliations

in Tehran that plagued the Carter administration, and on and on.

But I also asked them to consider some of the results of “9-11” that bear such startling resemblance to the “moment” that envelops Shakespeare’s play. The event itself clearly has its counterpart (at least one of them) in 1605 in the “Powder Plot” and the small group of Catholic subversives (ring a bell?—a small group of Islamist fundamentalists trained by Bin Laden, in our case!) renting a building in Westminster right next door to the Houses of Parliament for the express purpose of burrowing through the basement to plant barrels of gunpowder and light the fuse that would blow up Commons and Lords and King James who’d be addressing them. There has been some considerable talk since “9-11,” that our government leaders may have been at fault for reading the intelligence data that an attack very much like what the U.S. suffered was on its way but then ignoring or misreading it. Something similar is true of the Powder Plot; one of the thirteen conspirators had written a letter that exposed the plot to the authorities, unbeknownst to the conspirators.²² How long before the date of the scheduled explosion?—that’s unclear, and, in fact, it appears that both parliament and the king knew the bombing was coming but did not officially act on their information until the very night before, when they entered the cellars of the House of Lords and caught Guy Fawkes red-handed. A very equivocal state of affairs, very much like so much of Shakespeare’s play.

The spy network responsible for gathering evidence on the Powder Plot had become an international one by 1605; James, terrified at the prospect of his own assassination and an insurrection by the Catholics, extended that network.²³

22 “But the plan went awry. Someone—it is suspected to have been Tresham—sent a coded warning to Lord Mounteagle, the sole Catholic member on the Privy Council, to protect him from danger, and Mounteagle passed it on to Cecil, who unable to decode it, passed it on to the King. James deciphered it only a day before the explosion was to take place.” *LLT*.117.

23 “‘Getting intelligence’ was a major preoccupation of Elizabethan government in its final fifteen years, and it became a basic principle of government too with James. In the book of advice to Prince Henry, the *Basilicon Doron*...James counsels his son to take care always to spy upon his own

Shakespeare and his company could expect that, for any given performance, spies could have infiltrated the audience.²⁴ After “9-11,” we’ve become only too aware of the invasions of our personal privacy by the government and the wire-tapping and listening measures that have been taken to collect “intel” from American citizens. Many of us can remember seeing images on the news of angry Americans shortly after “9-11” cruising the streets of our major cities and levying threats, or worse, against anyone who looked, sounded, or dressed like people from the Middle East. The mentality of “if they’re not with us, they’re against us” has continued to generate unofficial policies of ethnic profiling against Muslims who, still in the minds of many, are guilty by association.

As difficult as it may be to believe, at the time of the writing of *Macbeth*, England was galvanized by a similar war on terror—this one against what was perceived to be a “Catholic Threat” intended, by means of Jesuit guerilla tactics, to result in the overthrow of the head of state and state religion. Since the release of the Abu Gharib photos, we have been struggling with the contradiction between our social values, our adherence to a policy of the treatment of prisoners according to the Geneva Convention, and our clandestine use of renditions and torture. It has become our dirty little national secret, still visible to us and others as long as the facilities at Guantanamo remain open and populated.

court and to be ever watchful about what occurs there. The Cecil Papers preserved by the Historical Commission show that Cecil spent much of his time running James’s government by working with intelligence and intelligencers.” *LLT*.66.

24 There’s no final proof for this assertion. But Kinney assembles more than speculations on the subject: “...playgoers at the Globe would hear *Macbeth* instruct the hired assassins of Banquo and Fleance to waylay the two as if they were acquainted ‘with the perfect spy o’th’ time’... The world of *Macbeth* mirrors a world of suspicion and danger in Jacobean England where men and women were well aware that surveillance was practiced at every level of their culture, and on the innocent, suspected, and guilty alike... *In Pierce Penilesse* (1592) Thomas Nashe likens a person in Paul’s to ‘an Intelligencer’ and finds agents provocateurs in Paul’s Churchyard; Shakespeare’s Hamlet had found such ‘sponges’ in Rosencrantz and Guildenstern... *LLT*.127.

James and his secret police operated in a bipolar fashion regarding torture as well. Although the official policy was that torture was forbidden,²⁵ Elizabeth’s and James’ secret police used it liberally to sniff out the activities of foreign and domestic Catholics. James, during the 1590-91 witch trials at Berwick, authorized torture liberally, and, whether the victims admitted to any wrong-doing or not in the process of it (who *wouldn’t*, just to make it stop?), James had them executed anyway (*LLT*.247). The same was true of the confessions that were forced from the perpetrators of the Powder Plot—documented, repeated, horrible acts of torture, followed by signed confessions²⁶ and then the public executions by drawing and quartering and burning before huge throngs of onlookers—the most brutal expressions of exemplary theatrical spectacle.

James saved the best for last—the torture of Father Henry Garnet who certainly knew about, but disapproved of, the Powder Plot, and who used what he called “the doctrine of equivocation” to invoke his religious beliefs to disavow, with no sin attached to the lie, what he knew to be true.²⁷ Arthur provides

25 “But torture was prohibited in England, and in the case of witchcraft (not demonology) the courts were often lenient... King James, like *Macbeth*, often thought of witchcraft. On January 26, 1605, the Earl of Mar wrote Robert Cecil from the King’s hunting lodge at Royston, ‘We are here continually busied either at hunting or examining of witches, and although I like the first better than the last, yet I must confess both uncertain sports.’” *LLT*. 254.

26 “Dissimulating himself, Sir William Waad, Lieutenant of the Tower of London, trapped Father Garnet into confession after (it was reported) he had been racked at least twenty-five times; through sheer torture, Waad also learned from Guy Fawkes. Once they were arrested, most of the conspirators were subjected to torture every bit as barbaric and savage as any cruelty *Macbeth* displays: they were placed in ‘The Little Ease,’ a slit in a stone wall four feet by two feet by eighteen inches in which they could neither stand nor sit; this was followed by the rack, where their bodies were stretched with increasing power by pulleys and levers until their joints might be torn from their sockets; and by the ‘Scavenger’s Daughter,’ rightly ‘Skeffington’s Daughter,’ where an iron hoop compressed its victim who was doubled up in a kneeling position.” *LLT*.120.

27 “Garnet discusses not only mental reservation but other strategies as well: using words true in one sense and false in another, obliqueness, ambiguity, amphibology. Equivocation for Garnet was to be used only for the health of the soul or body, piety, charity, just profit, or necessity, and not to

some interesting evidence to support James' understanding of the direction that the debriefing of Garnet was going and approved the painful methods used during it.²⁸

Shakespeare has insinuated the Garnet affair into the drunken ramblings of his Porter in 2.3. It's enough to say that the near economic depression that the U.S. remains in the throes of, partly as a result of huge unbudgeted war costs and uncontrolled spending (resulting in spiraling unemployment), can find its parallel within those ten years of devastating hard economic times in England from 1598 through 1608.

V. Oops! It's the play, stupid—Let's take the text for a little ride

What was the point to that set of exchanges between me and Scott's students, to anticipate a question from Scott's students that I wouldn't be present to receive? If I'd been able to return to those classes Monday morning, besides asking them how their prom had gone and what they did (I'm guessing they'd have fed me, to invoke the title of Arthur's book, "Lies like Truth"), I'd have continued the conversation with them. My assignment over the weekend would have been to ask pods of those students to collect research on one of the areas of historical concern swirling around 1606, write up what they'd found, and be ready to take me to places in the play where they had discovered a whiff of a connection to the material they'd collected. Then we'd have spent some quality time with the play, its language, specific scenes that permitted an interaction with the research we'd done. *Then* we'd draw whatever conclusions we could about what we'd seen of Shakespeare's times (the word "time" is everywhere in the play) and ours—what we'd seen in the play that could be *us*.

And I did just that when I returned to Mankato's campus and

be employed lightly lest it dishonor God. Perez Zagorin notes that 'Garnet further maintained that to protect themselves, Catholics would be justified in equivocating in an oath whether it was enforced or taken voluntarily....' 237.

28 "According to Giustinian (writing the court at Venice...,'His majesty was present *incognito*, a spy, as it were, in his own house...' 238.

took up the teaching of the play with my juniors and seniors. I put one presenting group (six students) in charge of apportioning tasks of historicizing the play—James; the Powder Plot; the Scottish witch trials through the 1590s; the economic issues; the religious "terrorism" issue; and the co-related issues of spying and torture. These would be writing tasks to be performed by each member of each group, to be brought to class, engaged in the presenting group's discussion of specific scenes in the play (the witches' scenes; the 2.3 "Porter" scene; the 4.2 "massacre" scene at Macduff's castle; the welter of contradictions inherent in 4.3 involving Macduff, Malcolm, and the problematic Ross; and the 5.5 soliloquy of Macbeth). We'd have a two-hour class period, with the direction provided by the presenting group, to thrash these issues out and reach some tentative conclusions. We'd have to take the "historicist oath," I told them: no final answers could *ever* be known about an historical *moment* that we were not a part of. And the same thing might well be true about the world we live in right now.

It was that group's job to facilitate discussion from the other groups and then to give their own "take" on the scenes in question. What transpired?—as full and as energetic a two-hour discussion on *Macbeth* as I'd seen in any of my Shakespeare classes in years. Why? Maybe, for openers, because, after asking them to write on the "9-11" prompt in class before my visit to Scott's class and my meeting with the *Macbeth* presenting group for a half hour to discuss areas of concern in their presentation, I'd stayed out of it. Theirs was the best kind of teaching—they'd come prepared with their own research into the historical context of the play and with their questions. And I was a student who sometimes responded to their questions or interpretations of scenes in the play, or remained respectfully silent.

And their discussion ended with so much more of a complex cultural sandwich wrapped around the play, along with their concession that the play left all questions open and murky—"fair is foul, foul is fair." Shakespeare seemed to have designed all of those obviously open and jagged spaces for us to fill, with the information we brought, what we already knew, and

the ideologies and superstitions and fears that drove us. Perhaps Shakespeare intended as much of the audience that attended an April 1606 performance.

And what had we gleaned about some of the scenes we'd been able to focus on? The students had a great deal of fun with Shakespeare's witches. The machinery that enabled them to take to the air and the "hell" of the trap door on the stage from which they may have emerged to deliver their lines not withstanding, they are both scary and harmless, humdrum and momentous. There's every possibility to see what James saw at the trials in Berwick, or not. They are filled with questions, the answers to which are hidden from us and maybe from them. 1.3 is a wonderful example of their power and powerlessness, their engaging of fate and their grasping nothing but the smallest of human emotions, spite. For being denied a chesnut, one witch promised to be that crone's pilot-husband's biggest nightmare:

I'll drain him dry as hay:
 Sleep shall neither night nor day
 Hang upon his penthouse lid;
 He shall live a man forbid:
 Weary sev'n nights' nine times nine
 Shall he dwindle, peak and pine.... (M1.3.18-23)

For all any of my students could tell, this was all spiteful venting—another way of wishing harm for very little damage done on another. We've all been guilty of it. And, to problematize the status of "the Weird Sisters" that Macbeth's superheated and impressionable imagination has raised them to (they say what has lain unspoken in the recesses of his mind and what he wants to hear), the witchly companions of the one who asserts "I'll do, I'll do, and I'll do" diminish it with a farting contest:

Second Witch: I'll give thee a wind.
 First Witch: Thou'rt kind.
 Third Witch: And I another.

It may take the imagination of a Macbeth to invest as much reality in such "spirits" as James has in his *Demonologie*.

With all the terrifying goings-on in the lead-up to the murder of Duncan in 2.1 and 2.2 recalling so much of the murder of

Rizzio by Darnley and his men with James' mother Mary present as well as the explosion that later killed Darnley and called into question Mary's involvement, 2.3 is a wonderful, if momentary, respite. That loud knocking that marks time at the end of 2.2 has awakened our Porter from a drunken slumber. He's only just gotten to sleep. And he's very slow to respond. No hospitality here. And a complete abrogation of his "security guard" job. Asleep at the switch. The deliverer of those emphatic knocks would have to wait until the Porter had drained his bladder. And, to entertain himself while his swollen prostate slowly allows his urine to pass, he imagines himself as what he most assuredly will be in just a moment: the gate-keeper of hell, evaluating the crimes of the "knocker" and consigning him to a level of hell befitting his crimes. He out-witches those farting witches in 1.3 by similarly invoking consumerist and materialist imagery similar to theirs. First, it's a "... farmer, that hanged/Himself on th' expectation of plenty: come in time!/Have napkins enow about you, here you'll sweat for't" (M2.3.4-6). Next, he notes "...an equivocator, that could/swear in both the scales against either scale/who committed treason enough for God's sake, yet could not equivocate to heaven" (M2.3.8-11). And, finally, before he is forced to conceal his privates and open the castle door, it's "...English tailor come hither for stealing/out of a French hose. Come in, tailor, here you may roast your goose" (M2.3.13-15).

An audience member would have had to have been unconscious or oblivious to his surroundings not to have picked up resonances of his own circumstances here. Or not! That is, the first and third allusions summon associations with the several recent crop failures, the rising price of corn, the advantage-takings of transactors of business during these hard times that resulted in cheatings and dupings and housing shortages. There may be an intentional slant at the outrageously costly coronation of James, which the Kings Men were required to take a part, and were provided pieces of "new red livery" to wear during the festivities (LLT.80). But the "equivocator" allusion, to Father Garnet himself, associated as he had become with the application of the Catholic Church's politic doctrine of equivocation, would

have been impossible to miss. Or not! It's an indirect slant. And, to get it, one, including James, would need to be paying strict attention.

And, if ever there were a parody of the paralysis of Macbeth between imagination and the realizing of it, the still inebriated Porter carries it to Macduff:

Lechery, sir, it provokes, and unprovokes: it provokes the desire, but it takes away the performance. Therefore much drink may be said to be an equivocator with lechery: it makes him, and it mars him; it sets him on, and it takes him off; it persuades him, and dis-heartens him; makes him stand to, and not stand to; in conclusion, equivocates him in a sleep, and, giving him the lie, leaves him. (*M2.3.28-36*)

Lies like truth again. Hard to tell the difference. Nearly Hamletian before the fact of Macbeth's act, which is about to be revealed. The killing of a sitting (recumbent, actually) king in Duncan. In James' mind (and he'd written about this in *The Divine Right of Kings* and elsewhere), there was no more heinous crime than that.²⁹ A crime against God's divine order. James had nearly been the victim of such a crime in 1605. And on other occasions. And, yet, this scene makes great dark fun at the very moment when such an act is underway—humor of the crudest form. The juxtaposition could, literally, be a show-stopper for a sitting king situated in the most prominent seat in the audience (such a suggestion sent Claudius to the exits and suspended the show-within-the show in *Hamlet*). If he was paying full attention. And, if he was, would he have noted that regicide occurs again—against Macbeth himself? And that, by the end of the play, with the very morally ambiguous Malcolm claiming the Scottish throne, there's every reason to ask if anything has

²⁹ "This doubtless contributed to James's lifelong fear of his own assassination; and it may also have contributed to Macbeth, which, notes Maynard Mack, Jr., 'confronts the full tragedy of king killing; religious political, and personal dimensions combine to piece out the full meaning of regicide; emphasis falls evenly on the action, the actor, and the figure acted upon.'" *LLT*.110.

changed in this near-Hobbesian environment.

And, of course, that admits into the conversation 4.3—the scene in which Malcolm and Macduff discuss still another form of magic in the healing powers of Malcolm's English host Edward the Confessor (another ineffectual leader who loses his life and kingship because of his weakness), but in between two confrontations that baffled my students. The first involves Macduff, who has left his family vulnerable by fleeing Scotland in hopes of coaxing Malcolm into the fight for his father's throne. But Malcolm isn't having any of it. He trusts no one, and calls Macduff's sincerity into question by questioning the loyalty of anyone who would leave his family totally exposed to Macbeth's violence. Malcolm's rejection leaves Macduff in despair.

But things grow incalculably worse from this point. Malcolm indicates that he would make the worst of kings, and makes an irrefutable case for his irremediable evil, "in whom I know/All the particulars of vice so grafted/That, when they shall be open'd, black Macbeth/Will seem as pure as snow..." (*M.4.3.51-53*). When Macduff is not willing to take no for an answer, Malcolm regales him with escalating levels of personal depravity:

...but there's no bottom, none,
In my voluptuousness: your wives, your daughters,
Your matrons, and your maids, could not fill up
The cestern of my lust, and my desire
All continent impediments would o'rbear
That did oppose my will... (*M.4.3.60-65*)

* * * * *

With this, there grows
In my most ill-composed affection such
A stanchless avarice that, were I king,
I should cut off the nobles for their lands...
And my more-having would be as a sauce
To make me hunger more... (*M.4.3.76-80*)

* * * * *

But I have none: the king-becoming graces...

I have no relish of them, but about
 In the division of each several crime,
 Acting it many ways. Nay, had I power, I should
 Pour the sweet milk of concord into hell.
 Uproar the universal peace, confound
 All unity on earth. (M.4.3.91-99)

Throughout Malcolm's Satanic confession, Macduff bravely tries to make allowances. But Malcolm's final claims hearken back to and trump Lady Macbeth's boasts in 1.5 to her husband.

But wait! This has only been a test, a calculated performance, Malcolm proclaims. And what a piece of show business it has been. If acting calls upon a player to fully become someone he is not, Malcolm has missed his calling, "Unspeak[ing] mine own detraction; here abjure[ing]/The taints and blames I laid upon myself,/For strangers to my nature" (M.4.3.123-24). Stranger than fiction. Malcolm protests that he's still a virgin, that he hasn't told a lie before this very moment. And what a quick and perfect study of a liar he has been! Truth like lies.

But there's more still. As Macduff struggles to regain his equilibrium, a figure appears in the distance. It takes some time for Malcolm and Macduff to identify him. And nothing could be more appropriate. It's Ross, the most versatile "player" in the cast. He's served every king, taken the measure of every person in the play, proved himself the ultimate relativist in serving Macbeth for his own purposes, most likely betraying his cousin and Macduff's wife to the group of Macbeth's murderers who will slaughter all and plunder the castle, and, now that Macbeth's supporters are in full retreat from him, has crossed England's borders to make his best deal.

A piece of text couldn't be more confounding than his next exchange. After listening to Ross' inflated speech about the state of the Scottish state under Macbeth, Macduff asks for news about the family he has left at risk:

Macduff: How does my wife?

Ross: Why, well.

Macduff: And all my children?

Ross: Well too.

Macduff: The tyrant has not batter'd at their peace?
 Ross: No, they were well at peace when I did leave
 'em. (M.4.3.176-79)

Unless we and King James have napped through 4.2, we recognize what Ross says as a bare-faced lie. And, after a fashion, he drops any pretense of ornate rhetoric and delivers Macduff the truth: "Your castle is surpris'd; your wife, and babes,/Savagely slaughter'd." Trick or treat. This is too much. Or is it? Because, as Macduff gasps for a breath to awake from the nightmare that Ross has delivered to him, Malcolm has morphed from an innocent unschooled in the slightest evil to full-blown action figure. He seems to have found his man in Ross. No time for tears, he scolds. Buck up: "Dispute it like a man." Forget about truth. It's hard to imagine the witches out-fairing-and-fouling Malcolm and Ross here.

VI. Closing All Windows

So, then...there you have it. Obviously, what I've shared, in way too much detail, is just the beginning of what's involved in *Macbeth*. The idea of "the moment", as I've learned from Arthur, and as I've discovered independently, is that Shakespeare is communicating to his audience in a kind of hypertext. The "moment" of the mind extends much further than the dimensions of our experience of a significant event, no matter how cataclysmic or seemingly independent from all other moments that surround it. There is, simply, no such thing as an independent moment in our minds. Each of these moments is contingent, radically, on numberless other moments and events that swirl around us. That cataclysmic moment—like "9-11" or an April 1606 performance of *Macbeth*—sets up a series of hypertextual windows opening, backward and forward: those moments actually contiguous with the event of "9-11" or the performance of *Macbeth* by the Kings' Men, the number of hours it took for either event to run its course from physical beginning to end, but also those other discursive moments that influenced either event to come into being, to continue the life of its connections so far beyond its own physical life, and operate reflexively in shaping

“the moment” of which it is only a relative part. Both undeniably powerful spectacles. Each capable of living again and again. We are *in* those moments. They continue to live within us. And, if we’re careful and don’t make any unsupportable claims about the unequivocal truth (remember the title of Arthur’s book about *Macbeth*) that “moments” like our “9-11” can tell us, they can afford us a parallel aperture for accessing a bit of the “moment” that shaped and was shaped by Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* and enable us to see ourselves in that play.

Indeed, my “Macbeth” moment extends back to include that visit of Arthur to my class so long ago—I can’t enter a teaching engagement with the play without carrying Arthur and his historicist perspective with me. A teaching moment that is cheap at twice the price.

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Appendix 1

SIGNIFICANT “MOMENTS” THAT COULD SERVE AS ENTRY POINTS FOR US AND FOR OUR STUDENTS INTO THE TEXT OF *MACBETH*

What follows is a list of some “MOMENTS” that could be explored with your students, with or without some preparation on their (and your) part, as you see prudent and appropriate. Please consider them as possibilities. You probably can find moments that are better and more immediately accessible than some of these. The point, though, is that *Macbeth* is filled with subject matter related to these events and issues like the following:

1. Martin L. King’s “I’ve got a dream” speech—August 28, 1963, Lincoln Memorial, the Freedom March to Washington—January 25, 1974, Conservative Political Action Conference, Washington D.C.
2. Reagan’s “Morning in America—“Prouder, Stronger, Better” Republican ad campaign for presidency in 1984
3. Reagan’s “We are like a shining city on a hill” farewell speech (an echo of John Winthrop’s ARRIVAL speech in the Massachusetts Bay Colony aboard ship in 1630)—January 11, 1989
4. My Lai Massacre news story—Seymour Hersh’s story on March 16, 1968 (over 500 civilian elderly, women, and children killed)
5. The Drowning of New Orleans and Post-Katrina Chaos Orleans (“Heck of a job, Brownie”)—August 31, 2006
6. Bush’s “Mission Accomplished” moment aboard the USS Abraham Lincoln, in a flight suit, with a banner be-

- hind him made and hung by the White House—May 1, 2003 (41 days into the invasion, with 98% of the casualties of the war yet to occur)
7. Neil Armstrong's "That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind" moment during the Apollo 11 mission on the moon—July 21, 1969
 8. Hilary Clinton's "It's 3am and your children are safe and asleep. But there's a phone in the White House and it's ringing—there's something happening in the world. Your vote will decide who answers that call" ad—February 29, 2008, when the phone rings in the White House at 3am, who do you want to answer it?" ad
 9. Obama's "Yes, we can" (si, se puede) mantra and ad campaign—February 2, 2008
 10. Irondale High School's PROM moment and its significance—Saturday, April 18, 2009
 11. U.S. Air pilot "Sully" Sullenberger lands a plane full of 155 people safely on the Hudson River—January 16, 2009
 12. The Reverend Jeremiah Wright fiasco and U-Tube rant, incorporated into Republican attack ad—October 27, 2009
 13. The Columbine massacre moment, and its 10-year anniversary—April 20, 1999 and 2009
 14. NSA Warrantless Wiretapping Law (and the re-visiting of that law recently with Representative Harman—August 2007
 15. Bush Administration Policy on Interrogation Methods and Torture (a series of memos released)—June 22, 2004