

Natsume Soseki and His Study of English

— Soseki and *Macbeth* —

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I

Soseki wrote an essay entitled “Concerning the Ghost in *Macbeth*” in 1904, the year after his return home from London, and expressed his opinions about the ghost in *Macbeth*. He called the appearance of the ghost supernatural and says, “Supernaturalism is a very interesting problem and is worthy of special attention.”¹ The ghost appearing in *Macbeth* is quite unusual, and is a manifestation of some agency above the forces of nature.

Macbeth killed Duncan, which made him sleepless. He then murdered Banquo. By doing so, his hands became redder and redder, and then he killed Macduff’s wife and her children. He says, “Methought I heard a voice cry ‘Sleep no more! / Macbeth does murder sleep,’ the innocent sleep,”² adding, “Glamis hath murder’d sleep, and therefore Cawdor / Shall sleep no more; Macbeth shall sleep no more” (106-7).

In the banquet hall the ghost appears twice, which aroused controversy among Shakespearean scholars. By introducing two groups of scholars Soseki wanted to make his attitude clear. He argued against them, saying

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that they are not logical. He supported a third group of scholars, namely A. Dyce and R. G. White, who say that “Both ghosts are Banquo.”³

Soseki agrees with the third group and says that “Mr. White in particular is worth listening to” (Vol. XXII, 203). What worries Macbeth most is Banquo, who appears as a ghost after Macbeth refers to him as “Here had we now our country’s honour roof’d / Were the graced person of our Banquo present; Who may I rather challenge for unkindness / Than pity for mischance!” (III. iv. 40-3). “There is no doubt that the first apparition is Banquo and the second one is also evident” (Vol. XXII, 203). As soon as Macbeth kills Banquo, many cares and anxieties occupy his mind. He says that “I drink to the general joy o’ the whole table, / And to our dear friend Banquo, whom we miss; / Would he were here ! to all, and him, we thirst, / And all to all “(89-91) and tries to clear himself of the charge of everyone present, but the apparition appears at that very moment. At this point Soseki says, “Mr. White’s logic is simple but shrewd” (Vol. XXII, 203).

The banquet is held. The murderer waits for Macbeth outside the palace building. Hearing from him that Banquo has been murdered, Macbeth feels greatly relieved. His clouds of doubt have finally been dispersed. Knowing that Banquo is not present, Macbeth feels relieved, but Fleance, Banquo’s son, who has escaped, is on his mind. Noiselessly, the Banquo’s ghost enters and sits in Macbeth’s place. Finding that the table is full, he is shocked, saying, “Thou canst not say I did it: never shake / Thy gory locks at me” (50-1), which shows that “The ghost is making fun of him” (Vol. XXII, 205).

Macbeth, who believed he had succeeded in deceiving all of his retainers, looks back to sit down on his seat, and sees Banquo sitting coolly. The sight turns his stomach, and fear passes from person to person like electricity. The apparition vanishes shortly, and the disturbance subsides. Macbeth is in a buoyant mood and says, “I have a strange infirmity, which is nothing / To those that know me. Come, love and health to all; / Then

I'll sit down (86-8), when suddenly the ghost re-enters. He is dumbfounded, saying again, "Avaunt! and quit my sight! let the earth hide thee! / Thy bones are marrowless, thy blood is cold; / Thou hast no speculation in those eyes / Which thou dost glare with! (93-6). Here Soseki says that "For whatever reason, he is unable to conclude that the second ghost is Duncan"⁴ (Vol. XXII, 205).

Soseki then asks "Whether the ghost seen by Macbeth is a hallucination or an apparition" (Vol. XXII, 205). Charles Cowden Clarke, John Philip Kemble, and C. Knight insist that the ghost is a hallucination, saying that it is a figment of Macbeth's imagination and they think it much better that the ghost is absent from the stage. Soseki, however, disagrees with them and says that *Macbeth* is centered upon Macbeth and the audience have the right to probe into the depths of his psychology as they have a closer relationship with Macbeth than with his vassals, so the ghost can enter the stage. Moreover, he asserts that "Literature is quite different from science, and science does not create an apparition"; he even says that "An actual apparition on the stage will diminish people's interest" (Vol. XXII, 206), which is very persuasive, although it looks simple.

Soseki set great store by actual proof. He thus concludes that "The ghost in *Macbeth* is an apparition, not a hallucination" (Vol. XXII, 206). These statements show that he could understand literature. In other words, he had an eye for literature and a sense for its appreciation. He understood that "Macbeth is egoistic, imaginative, and poetic" and went on to say that "He is not energetic but audacious and dauntless," and concluded that "These characters bring to pass his tragedy" (194), which is far-sighted.

Soseki says in his *Bungaku-ron* (On Literature), a book of criticism on English literature, published in 1907:

When I was a boy, I learned Chinese literature. Time was short, but I acquired from Chinese classics what literature was and had a vague idea

of English literature being similar to Chinese classics. If that was true, I was convinced that I would not feel chagrined at English literature as my lifework. So simple and naive was my reason of studying English literature. When I earned a master's degree in literature, I felt lonely in my heart, although I had time to read books on English literature.⁵

As the years went by, he complained of one thing after another. He was not happy with English literature, although he devoted himself to studying it. When he graduated from university, he "was seized with some anxiety of being deceived by English literature for no apparent reason" (Vol. XVIII, 9). Although he was not suited to studying Chinese literature, he believed he could appreciate it fully. He had some knowledge of English literature and was able to understand it as well as he did Chinese literature, and yet the fact remained that he felt a sense of incompatibility between them. In other words, he could not help but conclude that the Chinese classics were vastly different from English literature. Herein lies his anguish.

Although Soseki was distressed by a sense of incompatibility between Chinese and English literatures, his study of the latter went on incessantly. He published his papers on "Tristram Shandy," "English Men of Letters and Periodicals," and "An Essay on the Novel *Aylwin*" and clarified his position regarding English literature. The first essay led him to write *Wagahai wa Neko de Aru*. He says that "*Tristram Shandy* is complicated and clear, or quirky and elegant (Vol. XXII, 165) suggesting that it is worthy of notice. He understood the value of English periodicals in the 18th Century, and showed that he was interested in 18th-century English literature," indicating that he had set about studying English literature in earnest. If we consider from this angle, "some anxiety of being deceived by English literature," as quoted earlier, "should not be literally accepted as such."⁶

II

Act I. Macbeth and Banquo, two Scottish generals who have just defeated a revolt against King Duncan, are on their way to the King's palace when they are startled by the sudden appearance of three witches. Macbeth, who is Thane of Glamis, is told that he will become also Thane of Cawdor and King of Scotland as well; Banquo is promised that his sons will be kings, although he shall never rule.

When Macbeth learns that the King has ordered the death of the traitorous Thane of Cawdor and will give him that title, Macbeth begins to toy with the thought that he might realize, by force, the whole of the prophecy made by the witches. When they say that "Fair is foul, and foul is fair: / Hover through the fog and filthy air"⁷ (I. i. 11-2), Soseki notes here, "This is an advanced hint of the whole drama" (Vol. XXXII, 11). The witches appear again and wait for Macbeth while talking about the future of Macbeth, who now turns up, accompanied by Banquo. Macbeth says, "So foul and fair a day I have not seen" (iii. 38). Soseki asks: "Why is this so interesting?" (Vol. XXXII, 12). The answer is that Macbeth is already being put under a spell by the witches, and he is sorely tempted.

When Macbeth hears the witches calling him "thane of Cawdor" (iii, 49), he cannot believe this. What is more mysterious to him is the fact that they also call him "king hereafter!" (50). He is embarrassed and upset. The witches say that "So all hail, Macbeth and Banquo!" (68), which "drops an advanced hint" (Vol. XXXII, 12) and predicts the future development of the plot. Ross and Angus, the Scotch noblemen, appear and Ross says:

. . . and when he reads
 Thy personal venture in the rebels' fight,
 His wonders and his praises do contend
 Which should be thine or his: silenced with that,

In viewing o'er the rest o' the selfsame day,
 He finds thee in the stout Norweyan ranks,
 Nothing afeard of what thyself didst make,
 Strange images of death. (90-7)

Soseki comments that the lines 93-4 are “rather obscure” (Vol. XXXII, 12).

Immediately Macbeth is informed of the King's decision to make him Thane of Cawdor. Both Macbeth and Banquo are astonished at this early realization of the witches' prophecy. Macbeth says, “Glamis, and thane of Cawdor! / The greatest is behind” (116-17), which “is noteworthy” (Vol. XXXII, 12). Although he is loyal to the King, he already has the feeling that he has a secret ambition to become King himself one day. He then meets the King, who formally declares that Macbeth shall be Thane of Cawdor. This honor, however, is in part foiled by the King who says that his son, Malcom, will succeed to the throne.

Instantly ambition stirs up his jealousy, which brings about a split in himself. He whispers:

The Prince of Cumberland! that is a step
 on which I must fall down, or else o'erleap,
 For in my way it lies. Stars, hide your fires;
 Let not light see my black and deep desires:
 The eye wink at the hand; yet let that be,
 Which the eye fears, when it is done, to see. (iv. 48-53)

Here Soseki says that “There is no justification for making ‘the eye’ the subject of ‘let,’ as Delius [Nikolaus, 1813-1888] has proposed. Instead of improving the meaning, it only adds to the confusion” (Vol. XXXII, 12). He also asks a question: “(Why stars?) and not ‘moon’ or ‘sun’”^{*7}(Vol. XXXII, 12).

Scene v opens with the following sentences: “*Enter Lady Macbeth, reading a letter.*” “Lady M. ‘They met me in the day of success: and I have learned by the perfectest report, they have more in them than mortal knowledge. When I burned in desire to question them further, they made themselves air, into which they vanished (1-5). Soseki asks a couple of questions: Lady Macbeth enters, reading a letter from her husband. “Why is this interesting?” and “Why ‘they’ and not witches’?” (Vol. XXXII, 12). Soseki “calls the last sentence a striking line.” Lady Macbeth reacts to the letter and wants to do everything she can to make her rather weak-kneed husband succeed in life. She soliloquizes:

Glamis, thou art, and Cawdor; and shall be
 What thou art promised: yet I do fear thy nature;
 It is too full o’ the milk of human kindness
 To catch the nearest way: thou wouldst be great;
 Art not without ambition, but without
 The illness should attend it . . . (15-20)

Soseki “notices ‘milk,’” and wonders “Why the author used this word, as Macbeth is ferocious”(Vol. XXXII, 12).

Lady Macbeth decides to force her unwilling husband to become as evil as herself, and is already prepared to make Macbeth become king. She has no sense of principle, morality or decency. Macbeth soon arrives and sees his wife. At once she begins urging him to murder the King. Shocked by what she says, he hardly knows how to answer. He ponders, doubts, and hesitates. She mocks her husband, saying he lacks manhood and outlines a plan for the murder. Duncan and his attendants arrive at Macbeth’s castle. Banquo says, “. . . 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 observed, / The air is delicate” (vi. 5-9). Soseki

draws our attention here and says, “The effect of this passage is notable, illustrating (1) ‘Relief (2) the King’s perfect trust and innocence’ and (3) ‘heightens the sense of tragedy’”* (Vol. XXXII, 13).

Macbeth is pondering uneasily, telling his wife to proceed no further in this business. She overcomes him, however. He declares, “I am settled and bend up / Each corporal agent to this terrible feat” (vii. 79-80). Here Soseki takes notice of the long conversation going on between Macbeth and his wife, and says, “After many twists and turns Macbeth comes to a final decision, which is a detailed description of psychological warfare between them” (Vol. XXXII, 13). Here Soseki compares Macbeth’s words and those of Duncan when the King says to Lady Macbeth: “Give me your hand; / Conduct me to mine host: We love him highly, / And shall continue our graces towards him. / By your leave, hostess” (I. vi. 28-31). Soseki remarks that “The former is stifling and horrible while the latter is relieved and peaceful” (Vol. XXXII, 13).

Duncan says to Banquo, “This castle hath a pleasant seat; the air / Nimbly and sweetly recommends itself / Unto our gentle senses.” (vi. 1-3). Banquo answers, “This guest of summer, / The temple-haunting martlet, does approve, / By his loved mansionry, that the heavens’ breath / Smells wooingly here . . . / The air is delicate” (4-9). Here Soseki quotes that “This scene is peaceful with a bird and fresh air” (Vol. XXXII, 13). Macbeth talks with Banquo, who says, “The King’s a-bed: He hath been in unusual pleasure, and / Sent forth great largess to your offices. . . . and shut up / In measureless content” (II. i. 11-5). Macbeth replies, “Being unprepared, / Our will became the servant to defect; / Which else should free have wrought” (16-18). The atmosphere is so cordial that Macbeth is delighted to hear this.

The time to murder the King is approaching with each moment, and Macbeth is left all alone, feeling lonely. He is haunted by a dreadful vision of the deed he must do: “Is this a dagger which I see before me, / The

handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch thee. / I have thee not, and yet I see thee still (33-5).” Soseki says, “The dagger is evidently the creation of M’s oppressed brain and he is aware of it, at least after the first heat is over”* (Vol. XXXII, 14). Macbeth is suddenly interrupted by the ringing of a bell, which rouses him from deep thoughts and reveries. He goes to Duncan’s chamber to kill him and returns with his hands bloodstained. He says to his wife, “I have done the deed” (79). Lady Macbeth gives an answer, “I heard the owl scream and the crickets cry” (80). Soseki notes, “Owls, ravens, crickets, [sic] seem the watch of death”* (Vol. XXXII, 14). In a shocked state Macbeth mutters, “This is a sorry sight” (85). His wife taunts him for being so terrified by his bloody deed. He groans in despair and cannot sleep any more. The court is thrown into utter confusion when the King is found dead.

Act III opens with the scene in which Macbeth appears as the new King of Scotland, proving that the witches’ prophecies have completely come true. Meanwhile, Banquo wonders if the witches’ prophecy about him will be fulfilled. Macbeth fears that one of Banquo’s sons will become king. Lust for power has now begun to influence him, and he feels hard pressed to kill Banquo. He says, “There is none but he / Whose being I do fear and, under him, / My Genius is rebuked” (i. 54-7) and adds:

Upon my head they placed a fruitless crown,
 And put a barren sceptre in my gripe,
 Thence to be wretch’d with an unlineal hand,
 No son of mine succeeding. (61-5)

Here Soseki pays attention to the following lines and quotes:

If ’t be so,
 For Banquo’s issue have I filed my mind;

For them the gracious Duncan have I murder'd;
 Put rancours in the vessel of my peace
 Only for them; and mine eternal jewel
 Given to the common enemy of man,
 To make them kings, the seed of Banquo kings! (64-70)

His fear has not let him rest since Duncan's death. He plans the murders of Banquo and his son. Soseki here draws our attention to the lines :

If there come truth from them—
 As upon thee, Macbeth, their speeches shine—
 Why, by the verities on thee made good,
 May they not be my oracles as well,
 And set me up in hope? (i. 6-10)

Macbeth finally gives his orders to the murderers, telling them emphatically to kill Fleance without fail. Banquo is murdered, but his son escapes. Disappointed, Macbeth feels very uneasy. He holds a banquet. Here the drama comes to a climax. In his state of mental turmoil and spiritual anxiety, he cannot welcome the guests to the banquet, although he is reminded by Lady Macbeth of his duties as host.

The first murderer appears at the door. There is blood on his face. He says that this is Banquo's blood, to which Macbeth replies, "'Tis better thee without than he within" (iv. 14). Then he returns to the hall and approaches his own place. He wants to sit, but the Ghost of Banquo, the product of his guilty imagination, who only he can see, enters, and sits in Macbeth's place. The rest of the guests are surprised when he shakes with fear and talks to someone who is invisible to them. Lady Macbeth tries hard to give her husband a desperate sort of courage by scolding: "The fit is momentary . . . Are you a man?" (54-7). "The preparations for the ghost," Soseki points

out, “are made and create a tense atmosphere” (Vol. XXXII, 14). Macbeth, however, remains frightened and agitated, so that, in order to save the situation, she proposes that the banquet be adjourned.

Macbeth has already lost normal human feelings. He begins to have doubts about Macduff, who has failed to attend the banquet. Disillusionment and despair prey upon him more and more, and he wants to share a sense of solidarity with the weird sisters, hoping to know what the future has in store for him, and says, “I will to-morrow, / And betimes I will, to the weird sisters” (132-3). Here Soseki says that “Macbeth has undergone a sudden change” (Vol. XXXII, 14).

Macbeth meets the sisters again. They readily produce three apparitions, each uttering a warning: “. . . beware Macduff” (IV. i. 71), a nobleman who suspects Macbeth of having killed Duncan. Soseki drops an advanced hint here again by quoting: “First Witch. He will not be commanded: here’s another, / More potent than the first” (75-6); “Sec. App. Bloody, bold, and resolute; laugh to scorn / The power of man, for none of woman born / Shall harm Macbeth” (79-80); and “Third App. Be lion-mettled, proud; and take no care / Who chafes, who frets, or where conspirers are: / Macbeth shall never vanquish’d be until / Great Birnam wood to high Dunsinane hill / Shall come against him” (90-4). This last warning seems to be impossible, so Macbeth replies, “That will never be” (95). The witches’ words have caused him to feel conceited. He, however, has one more question about Banquo’s son ever being King of Scotland. Suddenly they vanish, leaving him confused and helpless.

Macbeth is even more afraid when told that Macduff has fled to England. Soseki touches here again on “Macbeth having undergone a complete change” (Vol. XXXII, 14). Immediately Macbeth orders his men to attack Macduff’s castle to kill his wife and children, demonstrating that he is now obsessed by the idea that he is being followed. He strides from crime to crime. Lady Macbeth, who once seemed so strong and coldhearted, is now

mentally and physically sick; her mind has gone, and her spirit is disillusioned and weary with a lack of sleep. Guilt crushes her.

In the meantime, Malcolm, with the English army, Macduff and Siward, is moving toward Dunsinane. To summon up his courage, Macbeth never forgets what the witches have told him. One by one, however, the prophecies fail him. Before this happens, Lady Macbeth dies, which leaves Macbeth more lonely than ever. Then he fully realizes his own punishment, but says, “ will not be afraid of death and bane, / Till Birnam forest come to Dunsinane” (V. iv. 59-60). His sensibility has grown so dull that even the news of his wife’s death hardly touches him.

A messenger says to Macbeth, “I look’d toward Birnam, and anon, methought, / The wood began to move (v. 35-6). Birnam wood does move toward Dunsinane, as its trees are used by Macduff’s army as cover.

Macbeth cannot believe it at all, becoming aware that it is all over with him, but he is resolved to die fighting. His courage becomes a desperate rage. He comes face to face with Macduff, and says, “Let fall thy blade on vulnerable crests; / I bear a charmed life, which must not yield / To one of woman born” (viii. 11-3), but his arch enemy reveals what Macbeth little expects to hear: “. . . Macduff was from his mother’s womb / Untimely ripp’d” (16-7). Soseki says, “The lines, iv. 59-60, v. 35-6, and viii. 11-3 are relevant to one another” (Vol. XXXII. 14).

Whenever we come across Soseki’s comments on English literature, we are well impressed with his honesty, i.e. he never tells a lie to himself and others. Whoever says about him or what people say about him, he does not care at all; he always displays a courageous attitude toward any explanation which does not convince him.

III

The witches appear at the very beginning of *Macbeth*. Realists asserted that they could not trust a drama based upon invisible creatures.

Shakespeare, however, assumed that they existed, and so were able to lead Macbeth by the nose, and in the latter part of the drama they were challenged by him, when he tried to take the initiative on his own. Shakespeare presented *Macbeth* based upon this assumption. They became the agents of his ambitious actions in a supernatural way. Soseki said in his essay about *Macbeth*, as quoted earlier, that the appearance of the Ghost of Banquo was supernatural and added, “Supernaturalism is a very interesting problem and is worthy of special attention.” There is a difference between witches and ghosts, but *Macbeth* is undoubtedly a supernatural drama. “Shakespeare simply took over the notion of the goddesses of destiny, who determined man’s fate beforehand, in order to emphasize the fatalistic qualities of *Macbeth*.”⁸

The three witches enter the stage and make their prophesies. These words sound plausible because Macbeth is already Thane of Glamis and Duncan has praised him for his victory over the enemy. It is not surprising that he will become Thane of Cawdor, and then succeed to the throne if anything happens to Duncan. The witches, however, do not answer to Banquo's question, the question giving Macbeth anxiety. As soon as they vanish, their predictions come true and work wonders on Macbeth. Macbeth meets the King, who formally declares that Macbeth shall be Thane of Cawdor. However, the honor of his son succeeding to the throne is denied him. Instantly ambition, “an unreasonable desire to enjoy honour, estates and great places,”⁹ and conceit make him feel jealousy, which bring about a split in himself.

This conceit overwhelms him, and he is so engrossed in his future dreams that he fails to see the realities besetting him. He is impatient to carry out his plans. “The witches . . . simply prophesy he will be King hereafter—at which his body starts in fearful recognition that neither present nor future self is what he had thought it to be.”¹⁰ With dreadful swiftness he is “rapt” (I. iii. 143), hardly capable even of doubt. Feeling extremely happy and

proud of himself, he returns to his castle, where he meets his wife and “he is doomed.”¹¹

Macbeth presents a striking contrast to Lady Macbeth, whose desires and passions are strong and violent: she urges him to kill Duncan. “She has no sense of principle, or morality, or decency; women of her kind never have.”¹² Shocked by what he has been told, he hardly knows how to answer. He is incapable of responding flexibly to the stimuli of the outside world, so he ponders, doubts, and hesitates, as stated earlier, saying, “Stars, hide your fires; / Let not light see my black and deep desire” (I. iv. 50-1). Even if the assassination settles a dispute or brings everything to an end, Macbeth will certainly receive his punishment in this world, and he muses:

If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well
It were done quickly: if the assassination
Could trammel up the consequence, and catch
With his surcease success; that but this blow
Might be the be-all and the end-all here,
But here, upon this bank and shoal of time,
We'd jump the life to come . (vii. 1-7)

Macbeth wants to kill Duncan, but is unable to do so because he is cowardly, and goes on to say:

But in these cases
We still have judgement here; that we but teach
Bloody instructions, which, being taught, return
To plague the inventor: this even-handed justice
Commends the ingredients of our poison'd chalice
To our own lips. (7-12)

His character becomes warped. In other words, good and evil get entangled in his mind, and he undergoes an emotional conflict. “For an instant he sways between ‘ill?’ and ‘good?’, unable to choose or to reject, and then he is falling away, falling into the deed he is going to commit.”¹³ This was noteworthy and drew Soseki’s notice. He was very much interested in the psychological portrayal of his characters. He was fascinated by Shakespeare, who was skillful in analyzing his characters philosophically, which amply demonstrated that Shakespeare had a lively imagination.

Lady Macbeth outlines a plan for the murder, to which Macbeth cannot agree. He says, “I dare do all that may become a man: / Who dares do more is none” (46-7), which indicates that he can recognize the difference between man and beast. Her irritation, however, adds new fuel to his conceit and overcomes him. “Henceforth she will herself be Macbeth’s Evil Genius, but she is not mere abstract Evil.”¹⁴ She declares:

I have given suck, and know
 How tender ‘tis to love the babe that milks me:
 I would, while it was smiling in my face,
 Have pluck’d my nipple from his boneless gums,
 And dash’d the brains out, had I so sworn as you
 Have done to this. (54-9)

Being unable to carry on any longer, he finally decides to carry out the deed. Strangely enough, however, the presence of Fleance makes him feel uneasy about his present situation. He finally begins to surrender to evil. “Macbeth is aware that the deed he contemplates is evil from the very beginning.”¹⁵

On killing Duncan, he is seized with repentance and tormented by his guilty conscience, which shows that he is a good person. His mind is still controlled by goodness. He “remembers that he once knew there was such

a thing as human goodness.”¹⁶ In other words, he is consciously possessed by a conscience, and good alternates with evil, revealing that his personality is both complicated and full of contradiction. “He has aptitudes for goodness, and aptitudes for crime.”¹⁷ A good example is found in one of Soseki’s works, *Kokoro*(The Mind), published in 1914. The hero of the story is in doubt about whether he is good or bad.

Act III opens with the scene in which Macbeth appears as the new King of Scotland. He fears the witches’ prophecy that one of Banquo’s sons will be king, saying, “To be thus is nothing; / But to be safely thus. —Our fears in Banquo / Stick deep” (i. 48-50). Saying that “Things bad begun make strong themselves by ill” (ii. 55), he, a tyrant arbitrarily behaving rationally, has already lost his goodness and is taken prisoner by evil, but this is temporary. His moral consciousness is still active. Meanwhile, Banquo wonders if the witches’ prophecy will be fulfilled on his part. Macbeth decides to give his orders to the murderers. Conscience, which has urged him not to murder Duncan, now forces him to murder many others.

Macbeth is in agony, which goes on endlessly. No solution is given to solve his anguish. His moral consciousness grows weaker and weaker, and he grows more and more evil. He does not return to good but rushes for evil. “The worst is that having scaled Everest, he finds soon that he must overcome an obstacle almost as great, another kingly figure who fills him with dread.”¹⁸ Macbeth is now so absorbed in his sin and conceit that he has become almost as wicked and cold-blooded as his wife. Conceit becomes a passion. “He knows that the first step along the primrose path was taken on his own responsibility.”¹⁹ He says:

... For Bauquo’s issue have I filed my mind;
 For them the gracious Duncan have I murder’d;
 Put rancours in the vessel of my peace
 Only for them; and mine eternal jewel

Given to the common enemy of man,
To make them Kings, the seed of Banquo Kings! (i. 65-70)

Banquo is murdered, but Fleance escapes. Extremely shocked, Macbeth is in constant anxiety as to the result.

Macbeth holds a banquet, as stated earlier, but it goes amiss because the Ghost of Banquo frightens him. He loses human feelings, hoping to see the weird sisters again. Each of them utters a warning, “. . . beware Macduff” (IV. i. 71), a nobleman who suspects Macbeth of having killed Duncan. Macbeth’s conceit has been aroused by the witches’ predictions. His question about Banquo’s sons ever being king of Scotland remains unanswered, which angers him.

From this moment Macbeth makes a resolve to seek revenge on those who prevent him from becoming king. He is ever more afraid when told that Macduff has fled to England. Immediately he kills Macduff’s wife and children, disclosing that he is now obsessed by the idea that he is being shadowed. He dreams of the end of this nightmare, while sinking into it more and more. His slaughter of Macduff’s family arouses people’s antipathy and a rebel army rises in revolt against him. Macduff, assisted by the King of England, resolves to revenge himself on Macbeth.

Lady Macbeth is now sick mentally and physically. She now walks in a waking dream. Awake or asleep, she is restless. Her obsession with the bloodstains symbolizes her consciousness of guilt and the outrage she has committed on her soul. Macbeth also has “murdered sleep” and cannot sleep any more. “So, too, the most terrible element in the punishment of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth is a loss of sleep.”²⁰

To summon up courage for himself, Macbeth never forgets what the witches have told him. He says, “‘Fear not, Macbeth; no man that’s born of woman / Shall e’er have power upon thee’” (V. iii. 6-7). He acts against fate, the supernatural power that is believed to control everything that

happens and that cannot be stopped or changed, and the prophecies, one by one, fail him. He murmurs:

I have lived long enough: my way of life
 Is fall'n into the sear, the yellow leaf;
 And that which should accompany old age,
 As honour, love, obedience, troops of friends
 I must not look to have; but, in their stead,
 Curses, not loud but deep, mouth-honour, breath,
 Which the poor heart would fain deny, and dare not. (iii. 22-8)

Before this happens, Lady Macbeth dies, but Macbeth remains undisturbed. Then he fully realizes his own punishment and muses:

She should have died hereafter;
 There would have been a time for such a word.
 To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
 Creeps in this petty pace from day to day
 To the last syllable of recorded time,
 And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
 The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!
 Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
 That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
 And then is heard no more: it is a tale
 Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
 Signifying nothing. (V. v. 17-28)

“So everything is futile, the murder of Duncan and all the sea of blood, for life itself is futile.”²¹

Macbeth is basically an honest or honorable man, trusted by everyone.

He is a courageous general and has distinguished himself in war, enjoying the confidence of Duncan. When tempted by the witches, however, he abruptly changes and becomes a victim of criminal conceit and finally a monstrously wicked man. Despite his glorious achievements, he is “a poor player / That struts and frets his hour upon the stage” and, brought to bay by Macduff and the English army, he is in imminent danger. “After Lady Macbeth's death, disillusion is added to despair.”²² For him, life has become “a tale / Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, / Signifying nothing.” He then becomes aware that her end only emphasizes the futility of his and everyone else's life. “The very concept of man has crumbled to pieces, and there is nothing left.”²³

Macbeth comes face to face with Macduff, who reveals what he little expects to hear: “Macduff was from his mother's womb / Untimely ripp'd”(viii. 15-6). Instantly his last hope is gone, and he fights on until he is killed by Macduff. In his death we see the awesome spectacle of the triumph of supernatural powers of conceit, i.e. fate, over a mortal who has become their willing servant.

Immediately after Macbeth has killed Duncan, the sound of knocking at the door reverberates within the castle and knocks him down. Although he is tormented by his guilty conscience, he is ready to block his ears. When he sees Duncan's body, he says that “. . . from this instant, / There's nothing serious in mortality” (II. i. 216-17), but now at the news of Lady Macbeth's death he mutters, “She should have died hereafter; / There would have been a time for such a word,” as stated earlier. He has already lost his sense of time. In other words, he has alienated himself from salvation. His life has become a waste of time. “Time has made a fool of him and lighted 'The way to dusty death.' Thus death is impending.”²⁴ “To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow ” quicken its pace, and his doomsday is imminent.

Soseki studied in London from 1900 to 1903. While in London, he found a Shakespearean scholar, who taught him about Shakespeare's works.

Thinking English literature would be much more important for Japan's modernization than any other literature, he made it his lifetime work. Although he worked hard at it, he realized that he was in a disadvantageous position because he was a foreign student. However, he thought it the duty of a man of letters to improve the taste of Japanese people by conveying to them a better understanding of foreign literature "standing on his own terms" (*jikohon'i*) and wrote *Bungaku-ron* in London. In 1903, he furnished *Macbeth* with explanatory notes, followed by *King Lear* and *Hamlet*. Later on at the University of Tokyo, he read *Macbeth*.

English literature and the cultural and spiritual climate of England were not always congenial to Soseki. Nonetheless, he was equal to the grave responsibilities attending the office of a university professor. This came from the motive powers that he had a moral responsibility to study hard, which remained unchanged all his life, and which was the warp of England and English literature. We then realize that English literature which he hated more than anything else, in reality, embraced him warmly.

Enticed by conceit, Macbeth loses control of himself, reveals his folly or ugliness, and dies in despair. Knowing that he cannot kill Macduff, he challenges his arch enemy, in which we can find the weakness and beauty of the human mind. While good and evil vie with each other for supremacy, Macbeth commits crimes. Through *Macbeth* Soseki felt the foibles of the human mind and learned a moral lesson, the moral lesson that "Shakespeare seems to have wanted to emphasize that man hopes to have his wish to do good granted, and yet has an impulse to be given to by evil ways."²⁵ He, however, never gave up all hope for man, which became his guiding principle.

Notes

1. Natsume Soseki, *Shoki no Bunsho* (Early Essays and Criticisms), Vol. XXII of *Soseki Zenshu* (The Complete Works of Soseki) (Tokyo: Iwanami-shoten, 1957, 7th Printing: 1983), p. 194.
2. William Shakespeare, *Macbeth* with an Introduction and Notes by K. Deighton (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1920), II. i. 99-100. This and the following references are to this book and are given in parentheses in the text.
3. Natsume Soseki, *Bessatsu* (Supplement) I, Vol. XXXII of *Soseki Zenshu, op. cit.*, 9th Printing: 1983, pp. 18-9.
4. Senuma Shigeki, *Natsume Soseki* (Tokyo: The University of Tokyo Press, 1970), p. 69.
5. Natsume Soseki, *Bungaku-ron* (On Literature), Vol. XVIII of *Soseki Zenshu, op. cit.*, 9th Printing: 1983, pp. 8-9.
6. Senuma Shigeki, *op. cit.*, p. 36.
7. An asterisk (*) shows the original to be written in English.
8. Louis B. Wright and Virginia A. LaMar, *Macbeth: A Study in Evil* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1959, 22nd Printing: 1971), p. xi.
9. Lily B. Campbell, *Shakespeare's Tragic Heroes* (London: Methuen and Co., Ltd., 1962), p. 208.
10. Robin Grove, "Multiplying villainies of nature," *Focus on Macbeth*, ed. John Russell Brown (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982), pp. 122-23.
11. G. B. Harrison, *Shakespeare's Tragedies* (London: Roulledge & Kegan Paul, 1951), p. 192.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 194.
13. Robin Grove, "Multiplying villainies of nature," *Focus on Macbeth*, ed. John Russell Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 123.
14. Louis B. Wright and Virginia A. LaMar, *op. cit.*, p. ix. Cf. Brian Morris, "The Kingdom, the power and the glory in *Macbeth*," *Focus on Macbeth, op. cit.*, pp. 40-1, "But, in terms of initiating action, the most decisive single power in the play belongs to Lady Macbeth. Her influence over her husband is total, and she, almost alone in the play, is quite clear about what she wants:

Glamis thou art, and Cawdor; and shalt be
 What thou art promised . . . (I. v. 12-3)
15. Kenneth Muir ed. *Macbeth, The Arden Edition of the Works of William*

- Shakespeare* (London: Methuen and Co., Ltd., 1969), p. li.
16. Edward Dowden, *Shakespeare A Critical Study of His Mind and Art* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 26th Printing: 1967), p. 256.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 250.
18. R. A. Foakes, “Images of death: ambition in *Macbeth*,” ed. John Russell Brown, *Focus on Macbeth, op. cit.*, p. 19.
19. Kenneth Muir, ed. *Macbeth The Arden Edition of the Works of William Shakespeare, op. cit.*, p. lxii.
20. G. Wilson Knight, *The Wheel of Fire Interpretations of Shakespearean Tragedy with Three New Essays* (London: Methuen and Co., Ltd., 1949), p.127.
21. G. B. Harrison, *Shakespeare’s Tragedies, op. cit.*, p. 202.
22. Derek Russell Davis, “Hurt minds,” ed. John Russell Brown, *Focus on Macbeth, op. cit.*, p. 223.
23. Jan Kott, *Shakespeare Our Contemporary*, tr. Boleslaw Taborski (London: Methuen and Co., Ltd., 1965), p. 77.
24. Peter Milward, *Sheikusupia no Jinseikan* (Shakespeare’s View of Life), tr. Anzai Tetsuo (Tokyo: Shincho-sha, 1985, 15th Printing: 1998), pp. 78-9.
25. Furusawa Mitsuo, *Sheikusupia Higeiki no Kenkyu* (Shakespeare’s Tragedies: A Study)(Osaka: Osaka-Kyoiku-Tosho, 1983), p. 36.

要約

本間賢史郎

漱石は『マクベス』を愛好した。このドラマが人間の心の善悪を取り扱っているからであった。Macbethは忠実で思い遣りのあるすぐれた武将であった。しかしながら、魔女に会ってそそのかされると彼の心に巢食っていた ambition あるいは conceit が彼を惑わし始める。夫人からの強い叱咤もあり、彼は遂に王殺しに走る。一旦罪を犯すと恐怖心にせめられて sleepless となり善悪の見境がつかなくなってしまう。彼の友人である Banquo を殺すことに成功するも息子を逃がしてしまい、不安に悩まされる。王に就任して晩さん

会を催すもBanquoの亡霊に執拗におびやかされ、錯乱状態を引き起こし、貴族達の疑念を一層深める。この場面は本編の圧巻で漱石も印象深かったと見えて論文を書いている。

最後の合戦でMacbethはあえない最後をとげる。夫の臆病や不決断を叱咤激励し、逡巡、後悔などの抵抗を払い除けてまっしぐらに突き進む夫人は、行動的である。しかし後半、二人の役割は逆転する。そしてMacbethは悪事に悪事を重ねて真一文字破滅への道をたどる。要するに両者は同じ種類の人間である。彼等はthe foibles of the human mindの持ち主であるがゆえに救われない。漱石は夙に人間の性善説や性悪説に興味を覚え、英文学に、特にShakespeareに関心を抱いたようである。彼の歴史劇が一つの良い実例である。

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