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The Power of the Supernatural in Four Shakespearian Plays

Amy M. Lyon

A Thesis in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts in English
degree at Longwood University.


Thesis Director


First Reader


Second Reader

August 11, 2003

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Introduction

Supernatural power plays an important role in Macbeth, A Midsummer Night's Dream, The Tempest, and Richard III as Shakespeare demonstrates the abundance of widely accepted supernatural elements in Elizabethan England. Supernatural characters or characters who use supernatural power manipulate humans, supernatural characters, and natural elements. Supernatural power is also used or acquired by characters to support their ambition. Characters exert their supernatural power to create illusions for other characters by causing them to dream, go insane, or transform physically. Similarly, the setting of each play facilitates the use of magic or supernatural power. Finally, supernatural power is used by Shakespeare's characters to judge the guilty and to exact consequences. Shakespeare's inclusion of these elements in his tragedy, comedy, romance and history shows that the supernatural was generally accepted among Elizabethans.

Shakespeare's treatment of the power invested in supernatural forces is a result of the culture of Elizabethan England. In The Plays of Shakespeare: A Thematic Guide, Victor L. Cahn describes the relationship between Macbeth and the King's own supernatural beliefs in 1606, the year the play is believed to have been first performed: "The play may also have been a tribute to King James I, formerly James VI of Scotland, who succeeded Elizabeth on the English throne, and whose interest in witches and other aspects of the supernatural was apparent in a book [Demonologie, 1597] he wrote on the subject" (321). Macbeth is among many Shakespearian plays that include supernatural beings and forces as an integral part of the thematic presentation. A contemporary reader often attempts to explain or rationalize the supernatural function in Shakespeare.

good analysis of Shakespearian drama acknowledges the importance of the supernatural in Elizabethan culture. Demonstrated in the 1549 Book of Common Prayer in a Cornish Litany: "From ghoulies and ghosties and long-leggedy beasties, and things that go bump in the night, Good Lørd deliver us" (Best).

Supernaturalism in the sixteenth century is represented through Shakespeare in four categories: the ability for characters with supernatural power to manipulate, achieve goals, facilitate illusion, and pass judgment. Manipulation is a major demonstration of supernatural power held by two different kinds of Shakespearian characters: characters that are supernatural like ghosts and fairies, and human characters who embrace supernatural power like sorcery. Macbeth is manipulated by the weird sisters and by Lady Macbeth, as they encourage his desire for power which eventually leads to his destruction. Although he resists the urges planted by the witches and encouraged by Lady Macbeth, he murders Duncan to be king. In A Midsummer Night's Dream, Theseus and Egeus both use the existence of supernatural power to manipulate other characters. Oberon, Puck, and Titania are spirits who also manipulate the human characters and the natural elements of the living world. Prospero is the chief manipulator of The Tempest. He uses his supernatural power to manipulate supernatural characters like Ariel and Caliban, as well as human characters like Miranda. Both Prospero and Caliban use their supernatural power to manipulate natural elements, like the storm, presented in the play. Richard is also a manipulator, attempting to control human characters as well as God. Human characters also call upon supernatural beings and their power to manipulate natural elements in order to thwart Richard's plans.

Ambition motivates characters to desire supernatural power and to use it against other characters. Lady Macbeth and Banquo summon supernatural forces to support their ambition. The weird sisters aspire to cause chaos and use Macbeth to achieve their goals. Macbeth desires supernatural power to help him become king. In A Midsummer Night's Dream, Egeus and Helena are humans who are characterized as having supernatural power. Oberon attempts to establish his power over Titania, using his supernatural powers to manipulate the plot. However, he also uses his supernatural powers for a more positive purpose when he tries to force Demetrius to fall in love with Helena. Prospero uses his supernatural power to regain his dukedom. He also uses magic to suppress Antonio and Sebastian's ambition to usurp Alonso. Caliban's ambition to regain control of the island is also supported by supernatural power. Richard uses the illusion of supernatural power to become king. Margaret characterizes Richard's power and presence by describing him as a supernatural predator, and Lady Anne desires supernatural power to eliminate him.

Characters with supernatural power also have the ability to create illusions. In each play, characters are subjected to dreams, insanity, and transformation. While each setting facilitates these illusions created by supernatural characters. In Macbeth, Lady Macbeth, Banquo, and Macbeth all experience illusions which they believe are dreams. These dreams also cause Macbeth to lose his sanity. The weird sisters have the ability to reshape their physical forms, and both the beach setting and Glamis Castle support supernatural events. In A Midsummer Night's Dream, Titania, Bottom, and the audience are all convinced that they each have dreamed the same dream. Theseus questions the sanity of the young couples, and Bottom is transformed into an ass. The woods are

isolated from the reality of Athens allowing for supernatural occurrences. Prospero admits to causing insanity among the characters in The Tempest. Boatswain and Alonso recall dreaming, and the magical action takes place on a deserted island where Trinculo and Caliban are transformed together into one monster. In Richard III, Richard's dreams are haunted by ghosts, his physical appearance is transformed by his evil actions, and the supernatural events are supported by Bosworth Field on the eve of the battle.

Supernatural characters also have the power to judge the guilty, inspire feelings of remorse, mark evil souls with physical deformity, and exact the consequences for criminal actions. Macbeth is haunted by ghosts who judge his actions. The witches are depicted as devils, as are Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. Macbeth is moved to remorse when Lady Macbeth dies, but in the end he dies for his crimes. Ghosts haunt Richard and Clarence but bless Richmond before the battle. Human characters like the Duchess of York and Queen Margaret call upon supernatural beings to avenge the wrongs that Richard has done. Richard is depicted as a deformed devil, and Margaret as a witch. Richard becomes remorseful when he is scared by the curses of the ghosts, but, like Macbeth, he has to die for his evil deeds. In A Midsummer Night's Dream, ghosts haunt during the night, and Puck haunts the players because of their inferior intelligence. Oberon and Titania reward their good characters by guarding them against deformity. Unlike Macbeth, Puck and Oberon repent their misdeeds, though less severe than those of Macbeth, and beg the audience for forgiveness; therefore, they do not die. In The Tempest, Prospero and Ariel judge the actions of the other characters. The evil in Caliban and Sycorax is demonstrated through deformity. Prospero repents, freeing Ariel, giving up his own magical powers, and forgiving Antonio.

The power of the supernatural to manipulate, provoke ambition, create illusion, and determine the guilty is a relevant theme in Shakespearian drama, as these features illuminate the importance of supernaturalism in the sixteenth century. Each of these supernatural characters created by Shakespeare are tangible, and therefore, represents supernatural power outside of Christianity which does not manifest physically in the plays. Cahn emphasizes this point:

Shakespeare and his contemporaries accepted belief in certain supernatural powers, but in presenting them onstage, the playwright did more than acknowledge the existence of these forces. Rather, he imbued them with personalities and motives, allowing other characters to react to them and thereby reveal their own values and morals. Thus the presence of supernatural forces not only offers opportunity for bold technical effects, or as much as the limitations of the theatre permit, but also leads to intriguing thematic revelation. (315)

This “thematic revelation” that is supported by the power of supernatural characters in Shakespearian drama emphasizes the interpretation of events as supernatural in Elizabethan culture. Although supernatural power is accepted and appreciated by some people in modern society it is not generally accepted as common knowledge as it was in the sixteenth century.

Manipulators and the Manipulated

In Shakespearian drama there are two kinds of characters, humans who have embraced supernatural power and spiritual beings, both types use supernatural power to manipulate life forces. Macbeth, A Midsummer Night's Dream, The Tempest, and Richard III are all examples of how supernatural power is used to manipulate humans, spirits, and natural elements. In The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre, Tzvetan Todorov describes the power of supernatural beings in literature: "This is one of the constants of the literature of the fantastic: the existence of beings more powerful than men" (109). Todorov's observation is relevant because Shakespeare, as a representation of the sixteenth century belief in supernatural power, shows that Elizabethans acknowledge the power of supernatural beings and humans who have acquired supernatural power to manipulate the common man.

In Macbeth, the witches manipulate Macbeth into trusting their premonitions in order to cause disaster amid the human characters. According to Cahn, "the witches are so strong a presence that at moments they seem to control the title character" (321). Hecate expresses the witches' desire to manipulate Macbeth using supernatural power

And that, distilled by magic sleights,
Shall raise such artificial sprites
As by the strength of their illusion
Shall draw him on to his confusion.
He shall spurn fate, scorn death, and bear
His hopes 'bove wisdom, grace and fear. (3.5.27-31)

The witches' desire to lead Macbeth towards destruction culminates when they trick him with riddles because they are forced to reveal truths about his destiny. As Macbeth becomes nervous about Malcolm and Macduff's impending invasion he confronts the witches and demands their prediction of his future. They respond:

Be lion-mettled, proud, and take no care
Who chafes, who frets, or where conspirers are.
Macbeth shall never vanquished be until
Great Birnam Wood to high Dunsinane Hill
Shall come against him. (4.1.106-10)

The witches manipulate Macbeth into thinking that he is safe from attack because of the improbability that the woods could move toward the hill; however, they fail to mention that Macduff's soldiers will close in on Glamis disguised as bushes. The witches are able to manipulate Macbeth because they have proven that they can predict Macbeth's future in the beginning of the play: "All hail, Macbeth! Hail to thee, Thane of Glamis. / All hail, Macbeth! Hail to thee, Thane of Cawdor. / All hail, Macbeth, that shalt be king hereafter!" (1.3.46-48). When they give this prophecy, Macbeth is unaware that King Duncan has made him Thane of Cawdor, so, when he discovers this fact he readily believes the witches' second prophecy, that soon he will also be king. Without the supernatural power possessed by the witches, they could not have manipulated Macbeth into killing Duncan.

Lady Macbeth also manipulates Macbeth in order to fulfill her own desires. Like the witches, she leads him toward destruction, as Cahn reveals:

In *Macbeth*, the witches gleefully carry out their malicious schemes, but they do not choose just any man on whom to work. Rather, they choose Macbeth, and lead him down a road toward which he is already inclined to travel. We know from his success in battle that Macbeth is violent and impulsive. When the witches tempt him with promise of the throne, and when Lady Macbeth taunts him about his lack of courage, his instinct is spurred, and thereafter his own capacity for destruction consumes him.

(69)

Macbeth's demise is a combined effort, the witches encourage his ambitious nature and Lady Macbeth forces him to take action. Lady Macbeth invokes supernatural power in order to persuade Macbeth to kill King Duncan. She personifies "fate" as a supernatural being and asks for help convincing Macbeth of the action he needs to take:

Hie thee hither,
That I may pour my spirits in thine ear
And chastise with the valour of my tongue
All that impedes thee from the golden round
Which fate and metaphysical [supernatural] aid doth seem
o have thee crowned withal. (1.5.23-28)

After Lady Macbeth has goaded Macbeth into killing Duncan, she assures him that, as King and Queen, they can not be judged for their crimes: "Hell is murkey. Fie, my lord, fie, a soldier and afeard? What need we fear who knows it when none can call our power to account?" (5.1.31-33). When Lady Macbeth says "hell is murkey," she claims that the supernatural power of hell will hide their evil deed. The manipulation of Macbeth, first

by the weird sisters, then by Lady Macbeth, leads to his destruction. Cahn describes Macbeth's victimization but claims that Macbeth still maintains the ability to make his own choices: "Sensitive to any suggestion that undermines his masculinity, Macbeth resolves to carry out the plot. No fate or supernatural energy does him in. He proceeds on the basis of his own need to prove his manhood to his wife, to fulfill his own ambition, and to release his own capacity for violence" (67). Regardless of whether Macbeth subconsciously desires to fulfill his prophecy, he allows himself to be manipulated by other characters.

Although the witches and Lady Macbeth manipulate Macbeth, causing his self-destruction, he, with Banquo's help, makes a vain attempt at maintaining his freedom of choice. He demonstrates, however, that he can not choose for himself when he succumbs to the wills of his manipulators. Macbeth tries to avoid killing Duncan, in spite of his wife's persistence: "If chance will have me king, why, chance may crown me / Without my stir" (1.3.144-45). Although Macbeth contemplates allowing fate to fulfill his destiny his weakness towards his wife's criticism changes his mind. He immediately succumbs to Lady Macbeth's manipulative statements about his manhood, just as he immediately trusts the witches' prophecy, against Banquo's warning:

That, trusted home,
Might yet enkindle you unto the crown,
Besides the thane of Cawdor. But 'tis strange,
And oftentimes to win us to our harm
The instruments of darkness tell us truths,
Win us with honest trifles to betray's

In deepest consequence. (1.3.118-24)

Although Macbeth acknowledges Banquo's argument that people or spirits are often manipulative, he is weak in comparison to Todorov's "beings more powerful than men," and readily murders Duncan to become king.

One characteristic of supernatural power is the power to manipulate elements of nature. According to Cahn: "Shakespeare's audience believed that witches were in league with the devil and empowered to fly, vanish, conjure storms and images, and inflict disease" (321). The witches demonstrate their supernatural power to control the elements when the first witch asks, "When shall we three meet again? / In thunder, lightning, or in rain?" (1.1.1-2). When Macbeth gives in to the manipulative provocations of the witches and Lady Macbeth, he embraces his desire to become king at any cost for his evil deeds. He declares that he has the power to manipulate fate, and also acknowledges the power of supernatural beings to manipulate natural elements:

But yet I'll make assurance double sure;
And take a bond of fate thou [Macduff] shalt not live,
That I may tell pale-hearted fear it lies,
And sleep in spite of thunder. (4.1.99-102)

In this scene, Macbeth acknowledges the historical tradition of considering both "fate" and "fear" supernatural forces, claiming supernatural power for himself in conjunction to the manipulation of natural elements.

A Midsummer Night's Dream also demonstrates the supernatural power of manipulation as spiritual and human characters influence others and the natural elements in the play. First, human characters use the belief in the existence of supernatural forces

in order to manipulate each other. Egeus claims that Lysander has used supernatural power to manipulate Hermia: “Stand forth Lysander. –And my gracious Duke, / This hath bewitched the bosom of my child” (1.1.26-27). Theseus characterizes Egeus as a supernatural being with the right to manipulate Hermia’s affections:

To you your father should be as a god,
One that composed your beauties, yea, and one
To whom you are but as a form in wax,
By him imprinted, and with in his power
To leave the figure or disfigure it. (1.1.47-51)

Theseus calls Egeus a “god” where Hermia is concerned, characterizing Egeus as having the supernatural power to manipulate life and death, and admitting that Egeus has the parental right to kill her if she refuses to marry Demetrius.

Second, supernatural characters in A Midsummer Night’s Dream use their power to manipulate human characters. Oberon manipulates Demetrius and Lysander with his love potion: “The juice of it on sleeping eyelids laid / Will make or man or woman madly dote / Upon the next live creature that it sees” (2.1.170-72). Puck also manipulates human characters in the play when he transforms Bottom’s head, and when he attacks the other players:

And at our stamp here o’er and o’er one falls.
He ‘Murder’ cries, and help from Athens calls.
Their sense thus weak, lost with their fears thus strong,
Made senseless things begin to do them wrong.
For briars and thorns at their apparel snatch;

Some sleeves, some hats –from yielders all things catch.

I led them on in this distracted fear (3.2.25-31).

As Puck wields his supernatural power over the players, he also acknowledges other supernatural influences when, like Macbeth, he characterizes “fate” as a supernatural force: “Then fate O’errules, that, one man holding troth,/ A million fail confounding oath on oath” (3.2.92-3). Titania, like Oberon and Puck, uses her supernatural power to manipulate human characters when, under the spell of the potion, she falls in love with Bottom. She asserts that she will use her supernatural power to force Bottom to stay with her: “Out of this wood do not desire to go. / Thou shalt remain here, whether thou wilt or no. / I am a spirit of no common rate” (3.1.134-36).

Finally, supernatural characters have the power to manipulate elements in nature in addition to manipulating human beings. Like Macbeth’s witches, Titania reveals that she and Oberon control natural forces that respond to their whims. Since Titania and Oberon are in a fight:

Therefore the winds, piping to us in vain,
As in revenge have sucked up from the sea
Contagious fogs which, falling in the land,
Hath every pelting river made so proud
That they have overborne their continents. (2.1.88-93)

Oberon also demonstrates supernatural power to manipulate elements in nature when he orders Puck: “Hie therefore, Robin, overcast the night; / The starry welkin cover thou anon / With drooping fog as black as Acheron” (3.2.356-58). In his statement, Oberon

asserts the power to change day to night and to move the fog, demonstrating his supernatural power over other forces of nature.

Supernatural power to manipulate spirits, humans, and natural elements is also demonstrated in The Tempest through Prospero, the chief manipulative force in the play. According to Michael Long, in The Unnatural Scene: A Study in Shakespearean Tragedy: “[Prospero] feels himself licensed to lie, manipulate and bamboozle, responsive only to the neat execution of his designs” (84). Prospero manipulates all of the diminutive spirits that are under his power. When Ariel reminds Prospero of his promise to free him, Prospero responds with a threat of power: “It was mine art, / When I arrived and heard thee, that made gape / The pine and let thee out” (1.2.293-95). Prospero manipulates Ariel by insinuating that Ariel should be grateful for his help even if it comes at the price of servitude and that, if Ariel is ungrateful, he will be returned to the tree. Prospero uses his power to manipulate Caliban in a similar way. As with Ariel, Prospero threatens punishment for Caliban’s disobedience, in this case not with imprisonment, but with violence:

If thou neglet’st or dost unwillingly
What I command, I’ll rock thee with old cramps,
Fill all thy bones with aches, make thee roar,
That beasts shall tremble at they din. (1.2.371-74)

Thinking to use supernatural power to trap a being in a tree or to inflict a pinching sensation over the body demonstrates how Prospero manipulates the spirits to do his bidding. Prospero also commands the spirits Ceres, Juno, and Iris. Although he does not threaten these spirits in order to manipulate them, he conjures them to appear at Miranda

and Ferdinand's wedding: "Spirits, which by mine art / I have from their confines called to enact / My present fancies" (4.1.120-2).

While Prospero uses his supernatural powers to manipulate the spirits in The Tempest, he also uses this power to manipulate human characters. In Things Supernatural and Causeless: Shakespearean Romance, Marco Mincoff describes the power Prospero wields over humans: "we are aware that the magic here is largely a question of illusion, that its victims do not realize what is happening to them, and that they are playthings in the hands of a superior power. They know nothing of Prospero's purpose, and, in fact, most of them in their blind stumblings are unaware of his existence" (98). Prospero's power to manipulate humans is shown when he puts Miranda to sleep: "Thou art inclined to sleep; 'tis a good dullness, / And give it way. I know thou canst not choose" (1.2.186-87). Another example of Prospero's power to manipulate other humans occurs when he tells Alonso that Ferdinand is still alive. Prospero reveals to the royal party that "some subtleties o'th' isle that will not let you / Believe things certain" (5.1.126-7), admitting that he has used his supernatural power to manipulate them. He then manipulates Alonso by falsely identifying with the king's belief that his son is dead: "have I means much weaker / Than you may call to comfort you, for I / Have lost my daughter" (5.1.149-51), just before revealing that his "loss" is a result of her marriage, not her death.

Supernatural beings in The Tempest also have the power to manipulate natural elements. The aspects of nature, land, water, fire, and air, are subject to Prospero's power as they are to Macbeth's witches and to the fairies in A Midsummer Night's Dream. Miranda acknowledges her father's power over these natural elements:

If by your art, my dearest father, you have
 Put the wild waters in this roar, allay them.
 The sky, it seems, would pour down stinking pitch,
 But that the sea, mounting to th' welkin's cheek,
 Dashes the fire out. (1.2.1-5)

Willard Farnham, author of The Shakespearean Grotesque: Its Genesis and Transformations, reveals Prospero's connection to natural elements, and Miranda's knowledge of her father's supernatural power: "She [Miranda] speaks as though her father had apparently just proved himself to be one kind of god of power where she would have been quite another. For she begins her speech by asking him to allay the storm if he has raised it" (162). Similarly, Caliban, as a monster, also has the supernatural power to manipulate natural elements. He recalls a time on the island when he and Sycorax were in control and curses Prospero and Miranda for usurping his dynastic right to rule. Caliban's curse includes the summoning of natural elements to do his bidding showing that, as a supernatural character, he wields the same power to manipulate nature as does Prospero:

As wicked dew as e'er my mother brushed
 With raven's feather from unwholesome fen
 Drop on you both! A southwest blow on ye,
 And blister you all o'er! (1.2.324-27)

Caliban's curse is unsuccessful because he does not possess the same strength of power as Prospero; this does not, however, mitigate his characterization as a supernatural monster. Both Caliban and Prospero are supernatural characters who have power over

natural elements. However, Prospero's power to manipulate encompasses all life forces, humans, spirits, and nature.

Richard III also demonstrates the ability of supernatural power to manipulate humans, spirits, and natural elements. To be king, Richard manipulates the human characters who stand in front of him. Like Prospero's manipulation of Miranda, Richard manipulates his family, as Valdine Clemens reveals in The Return of The Repressed: Gothic Horror from The Castle of Otranto to Alien: "The supernatural element could be held responsible, so to speak, for the atmosphere of terror and psychic turmoil that also arises from familial abuse" (31). Richard abuses the human characters in his family by turning them against each other. Clarence describes his confusion when King Edward imprisons him:

He hearkens after prophecies and dreams,
And from the cross-row plucks the letter 'G'
And says a wizard told him that by 'G'
His issue disinherited should be. (1.1.54-7)

Richard manipulates Edward, using false claims of supernatural power, when he disguises himself as a prophet. In The Scythe of Saturn: Shakespeare and Magical Thinking, Linda Woodbridge describes this form of manipulation of destiny through prophecy: "There is a fair amount of overt magical practice in Shakespeare's works. The commonest is prognosticatory –divination or prophecy by soothsayers, witches, and others" (6). Again Richard uses supernatural power to manipulate his family after he has had Clarence murdered:

But he, poor man, by your first order died,

And that wingèd Mercury did bear;
 Some tardy cripple bore the countermand,
 That came to lag to see him buried. (2.1.88-91)

Richard shows his power to manipulate, embracing Elizabethan belief in supernatural forces, and making reference to demons in explanation of why Edward's order to pardon Clarence did not arrive in time. Like Egeus and Theseus in A Midsummer Night's Dream, Richard uses the widely accepted belief in the presence of supernatural forces to manipulate human characters. Although these three characters merely imitate supernatural power their goals are achieved because of the belief in the supernatural of the other sixteenth century characters, making their actions as significant as legitimate supernatural manipulations.

Richard's power of manipulation is explained by Moody E. Prior in The Drama of Power: Studies in Shakespeare's History Plays: "He [Richard] is the embodiment of political genius with a lust for power, mastery of the calculus by which men are manipulated and power is gained, and total disregard of humanitarian and ethical considerations" (294). Along with Richard's supernatural power comes supernatural characterization. Although Richard does not possess the same powers as Oberon or Prospero, he is depicted as a supernatural being by his nephew, Richard, Duke of York: "Marry, they say my uncle grew so fast / That he could gnaw a crust at two hours old" (2.4.27-8). Embracing his power to manipulate, Richard dominates humans and attempts to extend his power to the manipulation of spirits. The spirit Richard tries to manipulate is God:

God bids us do good for evil;

And thus I clothe my naked villainy
 With odd old ends, stol'n forth of Holy Writ,
 And seem a saint when most I play the devil. (1.3.333-36)

The idea that Richard's actions appear to be an attempt to deceive God by doing false acts of good is absurd. However it is an example of Richard's confidence in his power to manipulate, and further characterizes him as an evil being because he wishes to cover up his villainous deeds. Although Richard's statement allows him to appear as a tangible, supernatural force, the "God" he refers to never appears, which classifies Christianity as being in a separate category from the tangible supernatural in Shakespearian drama.

Other characters in Richard III believe in supernatural power and call upon natural elements and the spirits that control nature to relieve Richard of his power. Queen Margaret curses Richard and his family, making the connection between the manipulative power of supernatural beings and natural elements: "Can curses pierce the clouds and enter heaven? / Why then, give way, dull clouds, to my quick curses!" (1.3.192-3). Lady Anne is another character in the play who calls upon spirits that control nature, in this case God, to punish Richard for the murder of King Henry VI:

Thy deed, inhuman and unnatural,
 Provokes this deluge supernatural.
 O God, which this blood mad'st, revenge his death.
 O earth, which this blood drink'st, revenge his death.
 Either heav'n with lightning strike the murd'rer dead,
 Or earth gape open wide and eat him quick
 As thou dost swallow up this good king's blood,

Which his hell-governed arm hath butchered. (1.2.60-67)

Both Margaret and Anne associate spirits with the power to manipulate natural forces and appeal to supernatural beings to end Richard's reign, while he uses their belief in his supernatural power to manipulate the characters in the play.

Macbeth, A Midsummer Night's Dream, The Tempest, and Richard III

demonstrate how supernatural power is used by human and supernatural characters to manipulate humans, other supernatural characters, and natural elements. Todorov states the significance of this theme using "The Fantastic" as a category in which the supernatural often applies: "a group of fantastic elements is based on the very existence of supernatural beings, such as the genie and the princess-sorceress, and on their power over human destiny" (109). Todorov's observations qualify the Elizabethan belief in supernatural elements as an element that is significant in Shakespearian drama and different from common beliefs of modern society.

Ambition as Incentive

Ambition is the incentive in Shakespearian drama that motivates characters to desire or to wield supernatural power. Todorov describes the ambitious supernatural character: “such beings symbolize dreams of power” (109). Macbeth, A Midsummer Night’s Dream, The Tempest, and Richard III are all examples of plays in which the characters use supernatural power in order to support their ambitions, which leads to the achievement of the character’s ultimate goal.

In Macbeth, both Lady Macbeth and Banquo call upon supernatural power to help them realize their ambitious goals. In Gothic (Re)Visions: Writing Women as Readers, Susan Wolstenholme characterizes Lady Macbeth as a supernatural being: “In folk and fairy tales, the demonic Madonna appears as the evil stepmother, one of our most familiar cultural stereotypes. In drama, Lady Macbeth is her prototype” (114). Lady Macbeth aspires for her and Macbeth to become the king and queen of Scotland. When the opportunity to achieve this goal is presented, Lady Macbeth invokes supernatural power to help her manipulate Macbeth into killing Duncan:

The raven himself is hoarse
That croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan
Under my battlements. Come, you spirits
That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,
And fill me from the crown to the toe top –full
Of direst cruelty. (1.5.36-41)

She embraces supernatural powers to help her become “cruel,” asking the spirits to take her milk, her maternal instinct to nurture, and to prevent her conscience from interrupting

the exaction of her plot. She also wishes to hide her ambitions and the evil acts which facilitate them from an amorphous god or supernatural being whom Lady Macbeth empowers with the ability to thwart her plans:

Come to my woman's breasts,
And take my milk for gall, you murd'ring ministers,
Where'er in your sightless substances
You wait on nature's mischief. Come thick night,
And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell,
That my keen knife see not the wound it makes,
Nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark
To cry 'Hold, hold!' (1.5.45-52)

Like Lady Macbeth, Banquo is ambitious enough to call upon supernatural power. He desires supernatural power to prophesy his future:

If you [the witches] can look into the seeds of time
And say which grain will grow and which will not,
Speak then to me, who neither beg nor fear
Your favours nor your hate. (1.3.56-59)

The weird sisters tell Banquo that while Macbeth will be king, his own sons will be kings. This prophecy satisfies Banquo's ambition for greatness, and, unlike Lady Macbeth and Macbeth, he is unwilling to take action against those who may stand in his way. He again calls upon supernatural power, but this time it is for spirits to prevent him from attempting to achieve his goals: "Merciful powers [gods, angels, or other powers of good against demons], / Restrain in me the cursèd thoughts that nature / Gives way to in

repose” (2.1.7-9). While Lady Macbeth and Banquo’s asking for supernatural power is not the same as actually having supernatural power, their belief that supernatural power exists to possess is a demonstration of the significance of belief in the supernatural during the sixteenth century.

Like Lady Macbeth and Banquo, the weird sisters use their supernatural power in order to realize their ambitions. Cahn describes the goal of the witches: “Perhaps the witches should be regarded as malicious meddlers, who desire only to play upon human vulnerabilities, to tap evil within” (321). Hecate underscores the ambition of the witches to cause destruction to the human world, and scolds them for using their supernatural power in order to achieve this goal. When Hecate observes the witches’ incantations which intend to destroy Macbeth, she is angry: “Saucy and over-bold, how did you dare / To trade and traffic with Macbeth / In riddles and affairs of death” (3.5.3-5).

Macbeth’s own ambition to become king provokes him to desire supernatural power. Lady Macbeth confirms that her husband has always had the desire to be king, but lacks the evil power to facilitate his future: “Thou [Macbeth] wouldst be great, / Art not without ambition, but without / The illness should attend it” (1.5.16-18). Macbeth embraces supernatural power in order to become king; however, his accomplishments are characterized in conjunction with images of supernatural power before he acknowledges this objective. The Thane of Ross describes Macbeth’s accomplishments in battle:

Strange images of death. As thick as hail
Came post with post, and every one did bear
Thy [Macbeth’s] praises in his [Duncan’s] kingdom’s great defence,
And poured them down before him. (1.3.95-98)

Ross's account of Macbeth's valor in battle foreshadows Macbeth's desire for supernatural power to aid himself in achieving other goals. Macbeth later invokes supernatural power to help him murder Duncan. At the point when Duncan is killed, Macbeth asks supernatural forces to guide him and to protect his evil plot from discovery:

Witchcraft celebrates
 Pale Hecate's offerings, and withered murder,
 Alarumed by his sentinel the wolf,
 Whose howl's his watch, thus with his stealthy pace,
 With Tarquin's ravishing strides, towards his design
 Moves like a ghost. Thou sure and firm-set earth,
 Hear not my steps which way they walk, for fear
 Thy very stones prate of my whereabouts. (2.1.51-58)

Macbeth admits to the supernatural quality of his actions, characterizing himself as being courageous in his evil endeavors: "Ay, and a bold one, that dare look on that / Which might appal the devil" (3.4.57-58). Similarly, Macbeth has difficulty deciding if the supernatural power of the witches' prophecy is good or evil in connection with the achievement of his goals:

This supernatural soliciting
 Cannot be ill, cannot be good. If ill,
 Why hath it given me earnest of success
 Commencing in a truth? I am Thane of Cawdor.
 If good, why do I yield to that suggestion
 Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair

And make my seated heart knock at my ribs
 Against the use of nature? Present fears
 Are less than horrible imaginings. (1.3.129-37)

The influence of the witches and Lady Macbeth, along with Macbeth's own ambition to be king, aid him in the execution of his murderous deed.

Macbeth's desire for supernatural power to achieve his goals is evil as contrasted against King Edward of England's use of power for good. The doctor, in conjunction with a king's Divine Right to rule, depicts King Edward as a saintly being who has supernatural power to heal the sick:

There are a crew of wretched souls
 That stay his [King Edward's] cure.
 Their malady convinces
 The great essay of art, but at his touch,
 Such sanctity hath Heaven given his hand,
 They presently amend. (4.3.142-46)

This comparison emphasizes the fact that Macbeth is not meant to be king, because, if he were, he would be blessed with good supernatural power with which to govern his people. Macbeth uses supernatural powers for an evil purpose: to obtain the Scottish throne. Long describes Macbeth's ambition and his use of power to achieve it: "This evil, in *King Lear* as in *Macbeth*, is Nietzsche's 'witches' cauldron' of horrible and insatiable destructiveness. And the people who live by it do so by deliberately conjuring in themselves the most terrifying aspects of the natural world, and then keeping their

power over what they have conjured” (182). The power that Macbeth “keeps” is the permanent evil taint on his soul.

In A Midsummer Night's Dream, characters desire or wield supernatural power in order to achieve various goals. Helena and Egeus are humans who are characterized as having supernatural power because of their ambitions to control other characters. Helena compares her ambition to obtain Demetrius's affection to the power with which supernatural beings chase one another: “Apollo flies, and Daphne holds the chase. / The dove pursues the griffin [monster]” (2.1.231-32). Her ambition to control Demetrius's emotions inspires this comparison of Helena as a supernatural being. Similarly, the power that Egeus tries to wield over Hermia is supernatural in nature. Egeus's ambition is to have Hermia marry Demetrius. Egeus's right to force Hermia into this marriage is supernatural because he is granted the power over her life and death. Although humans often assume power over life and death, it is Egeus's power sanctioned by Theseus that makes it seem supernatural. In addition, Egeus's ambition for his daughter appears supernatural because it is worth the cost of her life.

Oberon also uses his supernatural power to control another character. Oberon's ambition is to prove that he is superior in power to Titania. They have quarreled over a baby boy, and, when Titania suggests that they make amends, Oberon says, “you amend it, then. It lies in you. / Why should Titania cross her Oberon?” (2.1.118-19). When Titania continually refuses to give the child to Oberon, he decides to use his supernatural power to achieve his goal. Creating a love potion, Oberon's ambition is to make Titania realize that Oberon is stronger than she and that he, therefore, deserves the child: “Well, go thy way. Thou shalt not from this grove / Till I torment thee for this injury. —”

(2.1.146-47). Oberon's supernatural power helps him achieve his goals because the love potion is effective on Titania. When Titania awakens from the love spell, Oberon triumphantly relates:

Like tears that did their own disgrace bewail.

When I had at my pleasure taunted her,

And she in mild terms begged my patience,

I then did ask of her her changeling child,

Which straight she gave me. (4.1.53-57)

In comparison, Oberon also uses his supernatural power to achieve a positive goal. After Oberon has created the love potion to use on Titania, he sees Helena chase Demetrius through the woods. When Oberon realizes that Demetrius is mistreating Helena by retracting his profession of love for the favor of Egeus, he decides to use his power to make Demetrius fall in love with her:

Take thou some of it, and seek through this grove.

A sweet Athenian lady is in love

With a disdainful youth. Anoint his eyes;

But do it when the next thing he espies

May be the lady. (2.1.259-63)

Oberon intends for Puck to follow these instructions accurately, thus his good intentions redeem him, even though the wrong youth gets the love drops. Oberon's good deed excuses him from being categorized alongside Macbeth. Although Oberon commits an act of goodness, his second use of the love potion further demonstrates his ambition to prove he can exert his power over any character.

Supernatural power also supports ambition in The Tempest. Prospero aspires to regain his dukedom from Antonio, and he uses his magical powers to manipulate the action of the play in order to achieve this goal. Because he uses magic books, Prospero's supernatural power is so strong that he is able to bring all the characters who have wronged him to his island. Like the ancient Goddess Fortuna, he characterizes "fortune" as a supernatural being and asserts power over "her": "By accident most strange, bountiful Fortune, / Now my dear lady, hath mine enemies / Brought to this shore" (1.2.179-81). Prospero uses his power to exact justice for the usurpation of his dukedom. He disorients and manipulates Antonio, Alonso, and the other characters and then claims his rightful position: "[I] require/ My dukedom of thee, which perforce I know / Thou must restore" (5.1.134-36). In this statement Prospero threatens Antonio and Alonso to restore his dukedom, or he will use his supernatural power to force them into submission. In addition, Prospero has used his power to marry Miranda to Ferdinand; therefore, Alonso must acknowledge Prospero as the rightful Duke of Milan in order to legitimize Miranda's noble birth and deem her worthy of marriage to a king.

Prospero also uses his supernatural power, not for his own ambition, but to suppress the ambition of Antonio. Not only has Antonio aspired to usurp Prospero's dukedom, but, when they are stranded on the island, Antonio tries to persuade Sebastian to usurp Alonso's kingdom:

What great hope have you! No hope that way is
 Another way so high a hope that even
 Ambition cannot pierce a wink beyond,
 But doubt discovery there. (2.1.236-39)

Antonio wants Sebastian to be king because of the privileges he will receive as Sebastian's accomplice. When Antonio and Sebastian draw their swords to murder Alonso, Prospero uses his power to have Ariel awaken the royal party before any harm occurs. Prospero acknowledges Antonio's malevolent ambition: "You, brother mine, that entertained ambition, / Expelled remorse and nature" (5.1.75-76). Although Prospero chooses not to divulge Antonio and Sebastian's plot to Alonso, he suppresses this attempt, and demands to be restored to his dukedom.

Another character in The Tempest who uses supernatural power to achieve ambitious endeavors is Caliban. According to Farnham, "Caliban. . . creates a revolution because of aspiration to have a benevolent god as master instead of a vicious human tyrant" (157). Caliban's ambition to change the hierarchy of the island is demonstrated when he first sees Stefano and Trinculo: "These be fine things, an if they be not spirits. / That's a brave god, and bears celestial liquor. / I will kneel to him" (2.2.108-110). Caliban's characterization of Stefano as a god shows his desire to enlist supernatural power in order to displace Prospero's power on the island. Caliban's willingness to follow Stefano as opposed to Prospero is a result of his desire for revenge. He tells Stefano about Prospero's cruelty in the hopes that Stefano will usurp the island:

I say by sorcery he got this isle;
 From me he got it. If thy greatness will
 Revenge it on him –for I know thou dar'st,
 But this thing dare not -. . .
 Thou shalt be lord of it, and I'll serve thee. (3. 2.50-55)

Caliban promises to use his supernatural power and his knowledge of the island to serve Stefano, after Stefano murders Prospero. In order to carry out his goal of displacing Prospero's power, Caliban must eliminate the supernatural tools which aid Prospero:

First to possess his books, for without them

He's but a sot as I am, nor hath not

One spirit to command –they all do hate him

As rootedly as I. (3.2.87-90)

By removing Prospero from power on the island Caliban believes that he will have a new, benevolent master to serve, and he will receive justice for Prospero's treatment of him and for the murder of his mother. Cahn describes Caliban: "Caliban thus emerges as a creature whose brute force subverts whatever intellect he can muster, whose passion overcomes his reason" (302). In this case Caliban's passionate ambition to usurp Prospero compels him to use supernatural power, thus discarding "reason" because Prospero is obviously the stronger supernatural power.

In comparison to Macbeth, Oberon, and Prospero, Richard also uses supernatural power to promote his ambitions. In Richard III, Richard claims that his deformities prevent him from enjoying days of peace with love, friendship, and family; therefore, he aspires to manipulate and exert power over those who are happier in life than himself:

And therefore since I cannot prove a lover

To entertain these fair well-spoken days,

I am determinèd to prove a villain

And hate the idle pleasures of these days. (1.1.28-31)

Richard uses the illusion of supernatural power to achieve his goals when he disguises himself as a prophet. Edward, believing that a supernatural force has intervened on his behalf, condemns Clarence to death. This facilitates Richard's ambition to be king because Clarence, as the older brother, had stood in line before Richard. Richard admits to the use of supernatural illusions in order to promote his desires: "Plots have I laid, inductions dangerous, / By drunken prophecies, libels and dreams" (1.1.32-33).

However, Richard knows that Edward's prophet was not a legitimate supernatural being, and he is heedful of legitimate prophecies which forecast his defeat. When news of Richmond's mounting army reaches Richard, he admits weakness in his ambition:

I do remember me, Henry the Sixth
Did prophesy that Richmond should be King,
When Richmond was a little peevish boy.
A king . . . perhaps . . . perhaps. (4.2.98-101)

While Richard uses false supernatural power to manipulate his victims towards his goals, he also recognizes the foreshadowing of legitimate supernatural power which he does not possess. This weakness is described by Prior: "The moment of transient fear and remorse in Shakespeare's Richard calls attention to something in what Richard stands for that makes him abnormal and is self defeating" (309). Richard uses supernatural power to support his ambitions, but is thwarted by the legitimate supernatural power working against him.

Just as Edward believes Richard's false prophet that says Clarence will murder him, other characters believe in Richard's supernatural power, which helps him towards

his ambitions. Queen Margaret declares that Richard is a supernatural being who will use his power to reach his desired goals:

From forth the Kennel of thy womb hath crept

A hell-hound that doth hunt us all to death:

That dog that had his teeth before his eyes,

To worry lambs and lap their gentle blood. (4.4.47-50)

In her statement, Richard becomes supernatural because he is a dog from hell that bared its teeth before opening its eyes. Margaret tells the Duchess of York that Richard was born a demon who will scare all of the other characters, the lambs, into submission in order to realize his desire to be king. Prior supports Margaret's evaluation of Richard: "The impulse that drives Richard to the crown against all social, moral, and humane restraints is depicted as unmistakably unnatural" (290). While Richard being "unnatural" does not necessarily make him supernatural, he is definitively classified as existing outside of the human realm, and in conjunction with the supernatural powers attributed to Richard by other characters, his unnaturalness serves to support his ambitions with supernatural power. Margaret also believes that Richard is a devil, identifying him as a supernatural character, and also as the minion of stronger supernatural forces. She claims that these forces use Richard to accomplish their goal of collecting souls for hell:

Richard yet lives, hell's black intelligencer,

Only reserved their factor to buy souls

And send them thither; but at hand, at hand

Ensues his piteous and unpitied end.

Earth gapes, hell burns, fiends roar, saints pray,

To have him suddenly conveyed from hence. (4.4.71-76)

Margaret believes that Richard has been given his supernatural power in order for hell to collect souls and that his achievement of kingship is only a small concession before his service to the demons in hell is done and he is called to eternal damnation.

Similarly, Lady Anne also characterizes Richard as a demon. She then proceeds to compare Richard's demonic actions to the angelic Prince Edward:

... mortal eyes cannot endure the devil. –

Avaunt, thou dreadful minister of hell.

Thou hadst but power over his [Edward's] mortal body;

His soul thou canst not have; therefore be gone. (1.2.45-48)

Anne acknowledges Richard's supernatural power on earth but claims that, because her husband was good in life, Richard can not claim his soul for hell, alluding to Margaret's assertions that Richard works for more powerful supernatural beings. In addition, Anne desires supernatural power of her own as Richard professes his love for her; she wishes to eliminate him: "Would they [her eyes] were basilisks to strike thee dead" (1.2.150). Prior describes this intricate use of supernatural power to promote ambition: "in *Richard III* Shakespeare divested the demonic aspiration for power of all its glamour" (290). Therefore, Richard's supernatural power is reflected and cheapened through his ambitions.

In Macbeth, A Midsummer Night's Dream, The Tempest, and Richard III, characters desire and use supernatural power in order to promote their ambitious goals. These characters who elevate themselves above human reason in their desires for

achievement are deficient in certain qualities that make people human, according to

Cahn:

The playwright [Shakespeare] shows human beings at their most noble and eloquent, but also at their most vicious and stupid. Whatever their social status, however, most seem to undergo some version of this conflict. Some understand the battle inside them, while others carry on obliviously. We in the audience, however, remain conscious of the complicated nature of our species: blessed with enough angelic reason to make us proud, but cursed by enough by bestial passion to keep us humble. (303)

Macbeth is aware of the battle inside himself as he debates whether or not to kill Duncan. Puck is also aware of this struggle when he acknowledges his villainous trickery and attempts to embrace humanity. Similarly Prospero undergoes an internal battle between his desire for revenge and his desire to forgive. Richard, however, seems unaware of any internal conflict, embracing the evil actions that he has conceived. As Todorov states, the ambition of supernatural characters is to obtain power. In these Shakespearian dramas, the characters use supernatural power to obtain more power like Oberon and desire supernatural power to assist in the achievement of other power like Lady Macbeth. As a representation of sixteenth century beliefs in supernatural forces, Shakespeare demonstrates the importance of the supernatural ability to manipulate and achieve ambitions.

Illusion: Sanity, Dreams, Transformation, and Setting

In Macbeth, A Midsummer Night's Dream, The Tempest, and Richard III

supernatural power is demonstrated through the use of illusion. Illusions that are created by supernatural power include dreams, insanity, and transformation. While each of these elements actually take place in these Shakespearian plays, they appear to the characters to be, or are explained as illusions. In addition, the setting of each play aids supernatural illusions. Jonathan Baldo discusses the significance of setting to the creation of illusion in "Exporting oblivion in 'The Tempest'" which also applies to the settings in Macbeth, A Midsummer Night's Dream, and Richard III: "The colonizing Europeans imagined the territories outside their familiar boundaries to be magical locales in which the natives were apt to forget their own culture" (111).

In Macbeth, dreams are given the substantiation of illusion for Banquo, Lady Macbeth and Macbeth. Banquo and Macbeth question the reality of their first encounter with the witches. Banquo, in an attempt to subdue Macbeth's growing ambition, asks: "Were such things here as we do speak about, / Or have we eaten on the insane root / That takes the reason prisoner?" (1.3.81-83). It is either the supernatural power of the witches that makes Banquo believe he has been dreaming, or it could be his fear of accepting their predictions as reality. Similarly, Lady Macbeth experiences dreams, which are described as her internal illusions when she begins sleepwalking: the Doctor diagnoses her: "Foul whisp'rings are abroad. Unnatural deeds / Do breed unnatural troubles; infected minds / To their deaf pillows will discharge their secrets" (5.1.61-63). In Lady Macbeth's case, her "unnatural deeds" have been given the power over her mind

to disturb her dreams. Like Banquo and Lady Macbeth, Macbeth contemplates the possibility that he is dreaming when he sees the floating dagger:

Art thou not, fatal vision, sensible

To feeling as to sight? Or art thou but

A dagger of the mind, a false creation

Proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain? (2.1.36-39)

The floating dagger, which Macbeth considers a dream, is the key component that changes Macbeth's dream illusion to insanity, although he explains the dagger as part of a dream, he fails to admit that in reality it is his guilt that has begun to create these illusions in his mind.

Macbeth can not accept the reality of his actions so his conscience creates illusions like the dagger, and he goes insane because he can not explain these visions. Cahn explains how illusion leads to insanity: "so deeply is Macbeth corrupted by violence that he crosses the boundaries of rationality. Thus the witches may be said to have triumphed" (322). The supernatural power of the witches and of Macbeth's mind destroys rules of logic for Macbeth. Macbeth first loses his mind when the dagger appears: "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" (2.1.33-5). It is also possible that Macbeth is insane when he begins to have visions of Banquo's ghost at the banquet; Lady Macbeth describes his emotional state acting as if Macbeth has always had such disturbances which is not the case: "My lord is often thus, / And hath been from his youth. Pray you, keep seat. / The fit is momentary" (3.4.52-4).

The illusion of transformation is also a result of the influence of supernatural power in Macbeth. The witches have the power to create transformations of physical shape, as Lady Macbeth relates when she reads Macbeth's letter:

They met me in the day of success, and I have learned by the perfect'st 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. (1.5.1-5)

Macbeth acknowledges the supernatural power of the weird sisters because of their knowledge of the future, but they also show the power to create the illusion of transformation when they vanish, leaving Macbeth with questions about his future. Transformation is also shown the morning after Duncan has been murdered, when Shakespeare transforms his ordinary characters into the images of ghosts. These images are foreshadowed when Macduff exclaims: "Malcolm, Banquo, / As from your graves rise up, and walk like sprites / To countenance this horror" (2.3.75-7). It is supernatural power that can create the illusion that mortals have been transformed into ghosts. In "Shakespeare's Macbeth," Bill Delaney explains this encounter: "Shakespeare is packing the stage with people who look to the audience like ghosts, especially since Macduff has planted the suggestion that they will rise up as from their graves and walk like spirits of the dead. Not only are their faces white with fear and their hair in disarray, but they are attired in white, shroud like garments usually associated with ghosts" (7). Each of these transformations aid in the theatrical presentation of the supernatural in the play.

The setting in Macbeth aids the appearances created by supernatural beings. Woodbridge discusses the importance of the Shakespearian setting to supernatural

occurrences: "In many cases, Shakespeare situates magic at a remove from his own culture, historical period, religion, or gender" (8). The beach where the witches meet contributes to the illusion created by their supernatural power. The beach is far removed from the battlefield where Macbeth and Banquo were fighting: it is still a great distance from Macbeth's home at Glamis. Hecate adds to the supernatural illusion of this setting, using mythical characteristics: "Get you [the witches] gone, / And at the pit of Acheron / Meet me i'th' morning" (3.5.14-16). Acheron, a legendary river in hell, makes the beach setting more isolated from the rest of Scotland, and therefore more subject to magic. In comparison, after the murder of Duncan, Macbeth's home at Glamis is described as a supernatural setting. The supernatural power which consumes Macbeth and Lady Macbeth with ambition characterizes Glamis as the entrance to hell. The Porter describes Glamis directly after Duncan's murder: "But this place is too cold for hell. I'll devil-porter it no further. I had thought to have let in some of all professions that go the primrose way to th' everlasting bonfire" (2.3.15-18). Similarly Lennox, who was sleeping just outside the castle walls of Glamis, notices the change in the setting from Macbeth's home to a supernatural ground:

The night has been unruly. Where we lay
 Our chimneys were blown down, and, as they say,
 Lamentings heard i'th' air, strange screams of death,
 And prophesying with accents terrible
 Of dire combustion and confused events
 New-hatched to th' woeful time. The obscure bird [owl, bird of darkness]
 Clamoured the livelong night. Some say the earth

Was feverous and did shake. (2.3.50-57)

Both the beach setting of the witches and the hell-gate at Glamis allow supernatural occurrences and illusions to take place.

The supernatural power to create illusion is also present in A Midsummer Night's Dream. Oberon and Puck use their supernatural power to create illusions for all of the other characters in the play. Titania associates illusion she has experienced with dreams or "visions": "My Oberon, what visions have I seen! / Methought I was enamoured of an ass" (4.1.72-73). Similarly, when Bottom awakens to find his normal head restored, he too believes that the past actions were the result of a vivid dream:

I have had a most rare vision. I have had a dream past the wit of man to
say what dream it was. Man is but an ass if he go about t'expound this
dream. Methought I was –there is no man can tell what. (4.1.199-202)

In the Epilogue, when Puck claims to have set everything right again when he makes it clear that he and Oberon have used their supernatural power to convince their victims that they have been dreaming:

If we shadows have offended,
Think but this, and all is mended:
That you have but slumbered here,
While these visions did appear. (Epilogue.1-4)

In the Epilogue, Puck rationalizes the illusions to which the audience has been subjected by telling them that they had been dreaming, so that if they disliked the play, they could pretend that they too had fallen asleep and missed the real action.

Like Macbeth, when Theseus can no longer explain illusions created in the play as dreams, he approaches the subject of sanity. When the royal party discovers Hermia, Lysander, Helena, and Demetrius in the woods, the young couples claim that they have all been the victims of the same surreal dream. Theseus responds by questioning their sanity: "I never may believe / These antique fables, nor these fairy toys. / Lovers and madmen have such seething brains" (5.1.2-4). Although Theseus admits that people who are in love are often irrational, he questions the sanity of the young couples for the same reason that the audience questions them: How could they all have had the same exact dream? Marshall B. Tymn, Kenneth J. Zahorski, and Robert H. Boyer, in Fantasy Literature: An Historical Survey and Critical Guide to the Best of Fantasy, address the question of sanity in A Midsummer Night's Dream: "the reader is left wondering where illusion ends and reality begins, and whether our entire concept of reality is somehow deficient" (49). It is this loss of reality that forces Theseus to question the sanity of the young lovers.

Transformation, created by the supernatural power of Oberon and Puck, is a major theme in the play. According to Long, Puck plays on the insanity of the other characters in order to create the transformations: "the idiot bamboozlement of a mind tossed hither and thither without dignity, composure or ordinance by the currents of racing mischief are an intrinsic part of the high-force world finding their living emblems in Puck" (256). Puck uses his supernatural power to cause transformation in the play. Oberon gives Puck the love potion with the intent that Titania will fall in love with some odd animal creature. Puck again deviates from Oberon's instructions by transforming Bottom into

the object of Titania's affection. Instead of an animal, Titania gets a man with an ass's head:

The shallowest thickskin of that barren sort [the group of players]
 Who Pyramus presented, in their sport
 Forsook his scene and entered in a brake,
 When I did him at this advantage take.
 An ass's hole I fixed on his head. (3.2.13-17)

The illusion Puck creates with Bottom's transformation is based on his desire to wield his supernatural power over the players who are rehearsing just outside of the woods.

Farnham relates that Bottom is the perfect character for Puck's transformation: "For his naivety to work as admirably as it does, it must have greater freedom from sophistication than the naivety of his fellows . . . It makes him, of course, the one in his group who is the most susceptible to magical 'translation' into man with an ass's head" (78). Farnham argues that Bottom is more naive than the other players; however, the others are not overly intellectual. They accept his transformation with little exclamation and do not run away until Puck begins to haunt them. Quince relates the transformation to Bottom very simply: "Bless thee, Bottom, bless thee. Thou art translated" (3.1.105). Todorov categorizes Quince's simple-minded reaction as part of fantasy literature: "a pure incarnation of the absurd, of the impossible: even, if we accepted the transformations, we could not explain the absence of reaction on the part of the characters who witness them" (73). Both Oberon and Puck use their supernatural power to create transformations in the characters of the play in order to cause enough confusion to justify the plot.

The setting of A Midsummer Night's Dream is also a demonstration of how supernatural power can create and manipulate illusions. The isolation of the woods from civilization facilitates magical occurrences, where spirits are free to practice their supernatural tricks. Titania describes all of the places where she and her royal party of spirits have traveled: "Met we on hill, in dale, forest, or mead, / By pavèd fountain or by rushing brook, / Or in the beachèd margin of the sea" (2.1.83-85). Although the woods outside of Athens are home to Oberon and Titania, these characters travel in order to disperse their magical blessings. The setting in the woods creates a place where supernatural events can occur outside of the reality of Athens. Long describes this setting and the events that occur in the woods: "Even in comedy the experience of the dream-wood of Puck and the fairies was fraught with hazard and it confronted the adventurer with the fear of the unknowable" (255). Puck acknowledges the potential of the woods to be overrun with supernatural beings at night:

Now it is the time of night
 That the graves, all gaping wide
 Every one lets forth his sprite
 In the churchway paths to glide;
 And we fairies that do run
 By the triple Hecate's team
 From the presence of the sun,
 Following darkness like a dream,
 Now are frolic. (5.2.9-17)

In this description Puck emphasizes not only that the supernatural power is alive in the wood but also that it has the power to create illusions, including the illusion of nighttime when more spirits have the ability to roam about the setting.

Illusions explained by dreaming and insanity, and created through transformation, and setting, brought about by supernatural power are present in The Tempest. Both Alonso and Boatswain are convinced that they have been subjected to strange dreams while asleep on the island. Alonso relates that he hopes he was dreaming for fear of his sanity: "Th' affliction of my mind amends, with which / I fear a madness held me. This must crave –/An if this be at all –a most strange story" (5.1.117-19). Boatswain recalls the wrecking of the ship and his awakening aboard the ship having been separated from the royal party: "On a trice, so please you, / Even in a dream, were we divided from them, / And were brought moping [dazed] hither" (5.1.241-43). The dreamlike trance of Boatswain and the rest of the ship's crew is significant because they have missed the mind-boggling action of the play which created Alonso's concern about his sanity.

The illusion causing insanity that Prospero inflicts on the characters in the play is not limited to Alonso and the rest of the royal party. Caliban relates that he is on the brink of insanity as a result of the torture inflicted upon him by Prospero's spirits:

For every trifle are they [spirits] set upon me;
Sometime like apes, that mow and chatter at me
And after bite me; then like hedgehogs, which
Lie tumbling in my barefoot way and mount
Their pricks at my footfall; sometime am I
All wound with odders, who with cloven tongues

Do hiss me into madness. (2.2.8-14)

When Prospero uses his supernatural power over spirits to control Caliban and bend him to his will, the result, is the deterioration of Caliban's sanity. The illusion of insanity as a punishment is also created for Alonso, Antonio, and Sebastian. Gonzalo describes the spell the other characters are under as they run off following music played by Ariel:

All three of them are desperate. Their great guilt,
 Like poison given to work a great time after,
 Now 'gins to bite the spirits. I do beseech you [Adrian]
 That are of suppler joints, follow them swiftly,
 And hinder them from what this ecstasy
 May now provoke them to. (4.1.104-9)

The "great guilt" experienced by the characters originates from usurping Prospero's dukedom. In comparison, the insanity with which the royal party is afflicted is described as a euphoric state as it dances to Ariel's music. In the end of the play, Prospero repairs the damage he has done to the psyches of his victims: "My charms I'll break, their senses I'll restore, / And they shall be themselves" (5.1.31-32). In the breaking of his charms, Prospero demonstrates again that the supernatural power he possesses can make other characters go insane.

Trinluo makes the most reasonable explanation for the dreams and insanity that Prospero has created. He blames the madness on alcohol: "A pox o'your [Stefano's] bottle! This can sack and drinking do. A murrain [plague] on your monster, and the devil take your fingers" (3.2.75-76). Trinculo's explanation, however, is not accurate because not all the characters who lose their minds are drunk. Truiculo's attempt to find an

explanation for the change in other characters sanity shows the difference between strange occurrences and supernatural events. This is substantiated by Todorov: "All this, of course, does not transcend the laws of nature as we know them. At most, one might say that they are strange events, unexpected coincidences. The next development is the decisive one: an event occurs which reason can no longer explain" (28). Although reason can not explain the illusions presented on the island, Trinculo tries to apply rules of logic to the situation.

Transformations also occur in The Tempest. Prospero creates a transformation when he and Ariel induce Stefano to cross the island and discover Caliban. Trinculo and Caliban are lying together under a lean-to when Stefano sees them:

Have we devils here? Do you put tricks upon's with savages and men of
Ind, ha? I have not scaped drowning to be afeard now of your four legs.
For it hath been said: 'As proper a man as ever went on four legs cannot
make him give ground.' (2.2.55-60)

This illusion has been created because Ariel has haunted Trinculo and Caliban, manipulating them into this transformed position and making them appear as one supernatural being to Stefano. Caliban also is depicted as a transformed being when Trinculo exclaims: "Wilt thou tell a monstrous lie, being but half a fish and half a monster?" (3.2.26-27). Though Prospero does not cause Caliban's transformed physical appearance, he is the representation of transformation that occurs in a human who is conceived by a witch and the devil.

The island setting of The Tempest is ideal for the supernatural illusions that take place. Mincoff describes how the setting promotes supernatural power: "This . . . is a

distant island, unmarked on any chart, and its inhabitants—human and nonhuman—are in the closest contact” (105). Prospero acknowledges the magical potential for the island when he resolves to give up his powers:

Let me not,
 Since I have my dukedom got,
 And pardoned the deceiver, dwell
 In this bare island by your spell. (Epilogue, 5-8)

In the Epilogue, Prospero concedes that, without his powers, others including the audience may have the power to retain him on the island. This demonstrates that supernatural power is to be obtained through the island by any ordinary person, and therefore the island supports supernatural events. The mysticism of this setting is summarized by Montague Summers in The Gothic Quest: A History of the Gothic Novel: “Does not Shakespeare bring us into a world where Bohemia has a wild sea-coast, to an Illyria where dwells a noble lady whose uncle and suitor bear good old English names and carouse in good old English fashion?” (385). Although the characters do appear decidedly “English,” the island allows Prospero to obtain the supernatural power with which all of the illusions in the play are created.

In Richard III, supernatural power is used to create illusions: dreams, insanity, transformation, and setting. Richard is driven to the brink of insanity by the ghosts who use their supernatural power to haunt his dreams. Robert C. Jones describes the ghosts’ motivation for haunting Richard in These Valiant Dead: Renewing the Past in Shakespeare’s Histories: “In a sequence that is unique in the histories and that epitomizes this play’s memorialization of dead victims rather than dead heroes, the ghosts of those

Richard has destroyed 'revive' to destroy him with their echoing refrain, heaping the burden of the past on his bunched back" (41). While it is Richmond who actually destroys Richard, the ghosts play with his mind, forcing him to envision his loss before the battle actually takes place. Richard is weakened mentally by the illusions the ghosts provoke: "Methought the souls of all that I had murdered / Came to my tent, and every one did threat / Tomorrow's vengeance on the head of Richard" (5.5.158-60). It is indisputable that the ghosts' haunt Richard's dreams; however, it is questionable as to whether the ghosts are a creation of Richard's mind because they also appear to Richmond. Cahn explains this phenomenon in 16th century drama: "For Elizabethans, such figures belonged to one of two categories: objective ghosts had the power to make themselves visible to several people, while subjective ghosts were figments of a single imagination" (317). Unlike in Macbeth, where the function of the ghost is decidedly subjective, it is difficult to decipher if the appearance of the ghosts in Richmond's dreams makes them objective.

Margaret is not a supernatural character; however, she invokes supernatural power to curse Richard's dreams. Like the ghosts that haunt Richard in his dreams, Queen Margaret curses Richard's dreams with visions to drive him insane: "No sleep close up that deadly eye of thine, / Unless it be while some tormenting dream / Affrights thee with a hell of ugly devils" (1.3.222-24). Lady Anne recognizes Richard weakening mental state because she recalls his disturbed dreams: "For never yet one hour in his bed / did I enjoy the golden dew of sleep, / But with his timorous dreams was still awakened" (4.1.82-84). Ironically, Lady Anne receives retribution for her sleepless nights when she dies and haunts Richard in his dreams: "Richard, thy wife, that wretched Anne thy wife, /

That never slept a quiet hour with thee, / Now fills thy sleep with perturbations” (5.5.113-15). It is possible that the ghost of Lady Anne remembered Richard’s tormented dreaming and therefore knew that the best way to drive him insane and make him lose to Richmond would be to haunt him in his dreams. Dreams also facilitate illusions for Lord Stanley, characterizing Richard as a supernatural demon when the messenger recounts his haunted dream to Lord Hastings: “He [Stanley] dreamt the boar had razed off his helm” (3.2.8). This premonition was correct: Richard, as the boar, did plot to kill Stanley and Hastings. Stanley’s depiction of Richard as a boar gives Richard supernatural strength and power while simultaneously insinuating that Richard as the boar had literally haunted Stanley in his dreams. However, Hastings does not believe Stanley’s premonition:

Tell him [Stanley] his fears are shallow, without instance.

And for his dreams, I wonder he’s so simple,

To trust the mock’ry of unquiet slumbers.

To fly the boar before the boar pursues

Were to incense the boar to follow us. (3.2.22-26)

Again, Richard is associated with a boar; unfortunately for Hastings, Stanley was right to be scared of Richard, as Hastings found out when he was hanged.

Transformations are another illusion that occurs as a result of the use of supernatural power. Lady Anne reveals the transformation of King Henry’s body when Richard interrupts the procession:

O gentlemen, see, see! Dead Henry’s wounds

Ope their congealed mouths and bleed afresh.-

Blush, blush, thou lump of foul deformity,

For 'tis thy preserve that ex-hales this blood

From cold and empty veins where no blood dwells. (1.2.55-59)

She claims that Henry's body bleeds in the presence of his murderer and that Richard should "blush" because this reveals his guilt. Richard has the supernatural power to transform Henry, but only Anne recognizes the implication. Richard himself is transformed, according to Margaret, when she notices that "Sin, death, and hell have set their marks on him, / And all their ministers attend on him" (1.3.291-92). Richard's "marks" indicate that he is evil and thus transformed from a normal human being into a demon. Similarly, Richard claims that he has been transformed by a "mark" placed on him by the supernatural power of witches:

Then be your eyes the witness of their evil:

See how I am bewitched. Behold, mine arm

Is like a blasted sapling withered up.

And this is Edward's wife, that monstrous witch,

Consorted with that harlot, strumpet Shore,

That by their witchcraft thus have marked me. (3.4.67-72)

Although Queen Elizabeth and Jane Shore are not really witches, Richard invests them with the power to create an illusion of transformation on his arm.

The setting in Richard III also encourages the use of supernatural power to create illusions. Once Richard becomes king, England's characterization transforms to support the supernatural images that accompany Richard. Lady Anne depicts England as "hell" when she curses Richard: "Foul devil, for God's sake hence and trouble us not, / For thou hast made the happy earth thy hell, / Filled it with cursing cries and deep exclaims"

(1.2.50-52). In conjunction, Anne calls Richard a devil, the king of hell, as Richard is the king of England. Queen Elizabeth also refers to England as hell when she implores Dorset to flee Richard's reach of power: "If thou wilt outstrip death, go cross the seas, / And live with Richmond from the reach of hell" (4.1.41-2). The setting for the battle between Richard and Richmond is also supportive of supernatural events. Jones reveals: "The past he cannot undo comes back to haunt Richard most expressly and oppressively, of course, on Bosworth eve" (41). This scene is conducive to supernatural illusions because of its remote location, on Bosworth Field, in reference to the rest of the action of the play, and the characterization of the peasants in the north as superstitious. The field is located in the remote north of England. It is also significant for supernatural events because the battle occurs on November 2, All Souls Day, the day during which ghosts are rumored to roam freely and seek vengeance for the wrongs done to them in life.

Macbeth, A Midsummer Night's Dream, The Tempest, and Richard III all demonstrate how humans and spirits with supernatural power create illusions through dreams, insanity, transformation, and setting. Summers explains the significance of illusion as it pertains to the setting of Shakespearian drama: "we wander all one summer's night in the fairy-haunted wood a mile without the town of Athens. With him [Shakespeare] we hoist sail for that uninhabited isle, set amid what mystic ocean? . . . at the pit of Acheron Hecate and the weird sisters deceive Macbeth with fair-seeming shows. Have we not another world here?" (385). The supernatural privilege of illusion allows for events to occur which are out of the ordinary. Cahn describes the art of illusion: "all audiences have the capacity to suspend disbelief, that part of the magic of theater is our eagerness to believe what we know to be patently false" (6). It is the

difference between what the modern reader knows to be patently false and what the Elizabethan audience would accept as common knowledge that makes supernatural power in Shakespearian drama significant, because the supernatural would not be so dominate if theatre goers did not believe.

The Remorseful and The Guilty

Shakespeare creates characters with supernatural power to determine the guilty, inflict deformity, and compel remorse or death in villainous characters because of the sixteenth century belief in the absolute power of supernatural forces over humans. In Daemonic Figures: Shakespeare and the Question of Conscience, Ned Lukacher describes the importance of guilt in Shakespearian drama: “What is unique to Shakespeare is his disturbing synthesis or juxtaposition of the mouth and tongue of conscience with the gash or wound in the flesh, as though the pain of the call of conscience from within the mind were like nothing so much as a gaping wound that speaks” (204). In Macbeth, A Midsummer Night’s Dream, The Tempest, and Richard III, the power to inspire conscience and administer the consequences belongs to supernatural beings.

In Macbeth, ghosts rise from their graves to seek revenge for their murders and to judge the evil actions of the main characters. Macduff recognizes the significance of the power of supernatural figures to judge the living: “If thou beest slain and with no stroke of mine, / My wife and children’s ghosts will haunt me still” (5.8.2-3). He believes that if he is not the person to kill Macbeth, the ghosts of his family will not be avenged, and will haunt him for his absence at their murders. Macbeth also acknowledges the ghosts who will judge him for his crimes:

The time has been
That, when the brains were out, the man would die,
And there an end. But now they rise again
With twenty mortal murders on their crowns. (3.4.77-80)

Macbeth is scared of the ghosts, with their “murders” that he inflicted, who have the power to haunt his conscience. He denies the ghost’s right to judge him for his crimes, speaking directly to Banquo’s ghost: “Thou canst not say I did it. Never shake / Thy gory locks at me” (3.4.49-50). Macbeth claims that Banquo can not know that he was his killer because Macbeth enlisted murderers to attack Banquo. But it is Banquo’s supernatural power in death that allows him to know whom to judge for his murder.

Physical deformity is the indication of an evil soul in need of judgment in Macbeth. The witches are described as having an unnatural form, an outward reflection of their inward corruption. Banquo describes the witches’ appearance:

So withered, and so wild in their attire,
That look not like th’ inhabitants o’ th’ earth
And yet are on’t? –Live you, or are you aught
That man may question? (1.3.38-41)

In contrast to the witches, Macbeth is not described as having any physical deformity, perhaps because he was manipulated into his actions by the witches and Lady Macbeth. However, he is depicted as a devil with increased conviction as the play progresses. In the beginning of the play, the Captain describes Macbeth as the henchman of some supernatural force: “Disdaining fortune, with his brandished steel / Which smoked with bloody execution, / Like valour’s minion” (1.2.17-19). Later in the play, after Macbeth becomes king, his characterization has progressed to that of a full blown devil. Macduff exclaims: “Not in the legions / Of horrid hell can come a devil more damnèd / In evils to top Macbeth” (4.3.57-59). In comparison to the depiction of the usurping king, as damned, Malcolm describes Duncan, the rightful king, as an angel: “Angels are bright

still, though the brightest fell. / Though all things foul would wear the brows of grace, / Yet grace must still look so” (4.3.23-25). Malcolm refers to Duncan as the brightest angel that fell and continues to say that while Macbeth tried to take Duncan’s place as king, he cannot because of his evil actions.

Macbeth becomes a villainous character as the play progresses, therefore, he is judged and punished for his actions, and it is the privilege of supernatural forces to exact this revenge. Banquo expresses his concern for the fate of his friend: “Thou hast it now: King, Cawdor, Glamis, all / As the weird women promised; and I fear / Thou played’st most foully for’t” (3.1.1-3). Even Macbeth acknowledges the repercussions of his actions and hopes to hide them from the supernatural powers that might punish him:

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. (1.4.50-53)

Banquo’s ghost, the dagger, and the other supernatural illusions succeed in compelling Macbeth and Lady Macbeth to remorse. Malcolm characterizes the couple as demons:

Producing forth the cruel ministers
Of this dead butcher and his fiend-like queen--
Who, as ’tis thought, by self and violent hands
Took off her life--(5.1.34-37)

Lady Macbeth finally regrets her sins and commits suicide because she can not live with her actions. The supernatural images that haunt Lady Macbeth’s dreams judge her

crimes, the consequence being death. Macbeth is also moved to remorse, according to Farnham: "Macbeth is a tragic hero who rises to kingship by vicious actions but falls so far short of having any joy in them and suffers such constant agony from conscience that he is not to be put in the company of Richard or of Shakespearean villains generally" (141). Although Macbeth laments the death of his wife, he is still slain for his crimes; his commentary on Lady Macbeth's suicide is appropriate for both of their deaths:

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. (5.5.22-27)

The supernatural powers that afflict Macbeth's conscience prevail and avenge their deaths by moving Macbeth to guilt and remorse, finally exacting his death for his evil crimes.

Supernatural characters in A Midsummer Night's Dream demonstrate the power to judge actions and haunt humans. Puck describes the power of supernatural beings to haunt and punish:

... ghosts, wand'ring here and there,
 Troop home to churchyards; damnèd spirits all
 That in cross-ways and floods have burial
 Already to their wormy beds are gone,
 For fear lest day should look their shames upon.

They willfully themselves exiled from light,

And must for aye [ever] consort with black-browed night. (3.2.382-88)

With the playful tone of the Shakespearian comedy, characters in the play are haunted by supernatural beings who are passing judgment not for crimes committed but for the fault of imbecility. This use of supernatural in the comedy does not degrade the role but serves as a reminder to Elizabethans that the supernatural has the power to judge even if it is not for a severe crime. When Puck attacks the group of players simply because they are simple-minded, Quince exclaims: "O monstrous! O strange! We are haunted. Pray, masters fly, masters: help!" (3.1.92-93).

The power of supernatural beings to mark evil characters with deformity is also presented in A Midsummer Night's Dream. However, in this case the supernatural characters determine to prevent deformity from afflicting characters that are good. When Titania and Oberon reconcile, they bless the marriage beds of Hermia and Lysander, Helena and Demetrius, and Hippolyta and Theseus. Oberon guards these good characters and their offspring from the mark of deformity:

Never mole, harelip, nor scar,

Nor mark prodigious such as are

Despised in nativity

Shall upon their children be. (5.2.41-44)

In addition Helena, who is a good character, is compared to an angel in her composition, as opposed to Macbeth and Lady Macbeth who are described as demons in Macbeth.

Helena exclaims disbelief at her characterization as a supernatural being of good:

"Demetrius —/ Who even but now did spurn me with his foot —/ To call me goddess,

nymph, divine, and rare, / Precious, celestial?" (3.2.225-28). The supernatural power to mark evil characters with deformity and characterize them as devils is redirected in this play in order to reward characters for their goodness.

Puck and Oberon come closest to playing villains in the play. One of the fairies describes Puck's mischievous actions, haunting innocent humans and playing mean spirited tricks:

. . . you are that shrewd and knavish sprite
 Called Robin Goodfellow. Are you not he
 That frights the maidens of the vilag'ry,
 Skim milk, and sometimes labour in the quern [hand mill],
 And bootless make the breathless housewife churn,
 And sometime make the drink to bear no barm [froth]--
 Mislead night wanderers, laughing at their harm? (2.1.33-39)

Puck is a supernatural being who is judged for his deeds by other, more powerful supernatural beings. Oberon chastises Puck's misadventures and calls him a villain because his tricks were played with malevolent intent: "This is thy negligence. Still thou mistak'st, / Or else commit'st thy knaveries wilfully" (3.2.346-47). Both Puck and Oberon are moved to repentance for the harm that they have caused throughout the play. Oberon vows to set the situation right: "May all to Athens back again repair, / And think nor more of this night's accidents / But as the fierce vexation of a dream" (4.1.64-66). Similarly, Puck resolves to repent for his actions, begging the audience to, "Give me your hands, if we be friends, / And Robin shall restore amends" (Epilogue 15-16). In A Midsummer Night's Dream, the reformation of the villainous characters is achieved, and

unlike Macbeth, the characters must not pay for their actions with their lives. The supernatural characters judge each other for their tricks, inspiring remorse and compassion for the human race.

Supernatural characters in The Tempest use their power to judge other characters for their criminal acts; villains are depicted as deformed devils, and remorse and repentance are inspired in order to correct the misadventures of the play. Prospero and Ariel use their supernatural powers to judge the guilty. Prospero judges Antonio when he tells Alonso of the usurpation which “. . . in my false brother / Awaked an evil nature” (1.2.92-93). Lukacher describes the circumstances under which Prospero judges Antonio: “In *The Tempest* Prospero forgives his brother for having stolen his dukedom, but he knows that such forgiveness is without consequence for a man like Antonio, who is without conscience” (16). Although there is no hope that Prospero will move Antonio to remorse as he did Alonso, he still uses his supernatural power to pass judgment on his brother. This judgment is necessary at the end of the play in order for Prospero to forgive all the other characters and repent himself. Ariel also passes judgment over the characters whose evil actions harmed Prospero. He scolds the royal party for their villainy:

You are three men of sin, whom destiny –
That hath to instrument this lower world
And what is in’t –the never-surfeited sea
Hath caused to belch up you, and on this island
Where man doth not inhabit, you ’mongst men
Being most unfit to live. (3.3.53-58)

Ariel demonstrates supernatural power that gives him the right to judge the actions of human beings. When Sebastian and Antonio try to attack him, he scoffs: “You fools! I and my fellows / Are ministers of fate. The elements / O whom your swords are tempered” (3.3.60-62). Both Prospero and Ariel use their supernatural power to judge those who have committed acts that these characters deem criminal and therefore deserving of punishment.

In The Tempest, as in Macbeth, unrepentant evil characters are depicted as deformed devils. Gonzalo makes the first reference to deformities, showing the significance of the meaning taken from a mark of deformity. During the storm, he resolves that the ship cannot sink because the Captain is a man which fate has marked for hanging, not drowning: “I have great comfort from this fellow. Methinks he hath no drowning mark upon him” (1.1.25-26). Prospero reveals other instances where evil characters are marked by deformity. When he describes Sycorax, he characterizes her with outward deformity that matches her inward villainy: “The foul witch Sycorax, who with age and envy / Was grown into a hoop” (1.2.259-60). Mincoff notices that there is very little difference between the supernatural powers of Sycorax and Prospero; however, Sycorax’s deformity is a definitive sign that her power is evil, while Prospero remains unblemished: “Prospero and Sycorax are, of course, contrasted very obviously in other ways—the benevolent magician and the evil witch who has dealings with the devil—but not in such a way as to suggest more than a hazy, popular distinction between white and black magic” (113). Caliban is also depicted by Prospero as having a deformity that reflects his evil soul: “the son that she [Sycorax] did litter here, / A freckled whelp, hag-born—not honored with / A human shape” (1.2.284-86). Like Macbeth’s Duncan and A

Midsummer Night's Dream's Helena, Miranda characterizes Ferdinand as a celestial

being with a perfect shape that represents a good soul: "What is't? A spirit? / Lord, how it looks about! Believe me, sir, / It carries a brave form. But 'tis a spirit" (1.2.413-15).

This contrast shows the different characterizations of people who are evil and people who are good, which plays a part in Shakespeare's representation of the supernatural in Elizabethan England.

Prospero's repentance, reformation, and restoration is the most significant in all four plays. He is judged by no supernatural being but is a human with supernatural power whose own conscience moves him to remorse. Prospero's first act of repentance is to free Ariel, which he had promised: "My Ariel, chick, / That is my charge. Then to the elements / Be free and fare thou well" (5.1.320-22). Prospero feels guilty for the actions he has taken to exact vengeance throughout the play: the manner in which he atones for these villainies is through unconditional forgiveness. He forgives Antonio, though he knows that Antonio is not repentant: "For you, most wicked sir, whom to call brother / Would even infect my mouth, I do forgive / Thy rankest fault, all of them" (5.1.132-34). In addition, Prospero demonstrates repentance for his sins by giving up his powers. According to Lois Feuer in "Happy families: repentance and restoration in 'The Tempest' and the Joseph narrative," "Analogously, Prospero reintegrates himself into his society by divesting himself of his magical powers. Prospero's forgiveness of his brother, grudging though it may be, is simultaneous with his abjuration of his 'rough magic'" (274). Not only does Prospero cast aside his evil fantasies of revenge along with his supernatural power, but he makes certain that no human will have the opportunity to possess such power in the future:

I'll break my staff,
 Bury it certain fathoms in the earth,
 And deeper than did ever plummet sound
 I'll drown my book. (5.1.54-57)

Prospero's repentance goes so far that it even encompasses the audience in his plea for forgiveness. Feuer describes Prospero's remorse: "As providential producer, Prospero in the Epilogue extends to the audience the responsibility for both forgiveness and aesthetic completion" (277). Like Oberon and Puck, Prospero's willingness to make reparations for the wrongs he has done exempt him from having to die for his actions. He demonstrates his remorse in the Epilogue: "As you from crimes would pardoned be, / Let your indulgence set me free" (Epilogue 19-20). The literary significance of Prospero's character for his atonement in The Tempest is expressed by L. Sprague de Camp in Literary Swordsmen and Sorcerers: The Makers of Heroic Fantasy: "Still there is an obvious place in fantasy for the good magician, and medieval romancers toyed with giving Merlin that rôle. Shakespeare finally broke the tabu with his Prospero; although to placate critics, he has his wizard give up his magic at the end. (Prospero may be viewed as a combination of Merlin and Dr. John Dee, the scholarly Elizabethan astrologer and occultist.) Since then the white wizard, long beard and all, has been a fixture in heroic fantasy" (240). This depiction of Prospero as a "white wizard" substantiates Shakespeare's motivation for letting him live when characters like Macbeth and Richard have to die.

In Richard III supernatural beings judge the guilty, inspire remorse, mark evil souls with deformities, and claim the lives of villains. Richard is punished for his crimes

through the apparitions of ghosts who come to drive his conscience to guilt. The Duchess of York, Richard's mother, invokes the ghosts to avenge the murders Richard has committed:

Dead life, blind sight, poor mortal living ghost,
 Woe's scene, world's shame, grave's due by life usurped,
 Brief abstract and record of tedious days,
 Rest thy unrest on England's lawful earth,
 Unlawfully made drunk with innocents' blood. (4.4.26-30)

Like the ghosts that haunt Richard on the battlefield, convincing him that he deserves to lose to Richmond because of his villainies, Clarence relates that the ghosts of the men he has murdered haunt his dreams:

Unto the kingdom of perpetual night.
 The first that there did greet my stranger soul
 Was my great father-in-law, renowned Warwick,
 Who cried aloud, 'What scourge for perjury
 Can this dark monarchy afford false Clarence?'
 And so he vanished. Then came wand'ring by
 A shadow like an angel, with bright hair,
 Dabbled in blood, and he shrieked out aloud,
 'Clarence is come: false, fleeting, perjured Clarence,
 That stabbed me in the field by Tewkesbury.
 Seize on him, furries! Take him unto torment! (1.4.47-57)

Not only do the ghosts haunt Clarence, but they torture his already dead soul in order to receive retribution for the wrongs done to them. These ghosts intend to inspire feelings of remorse in both Clarence and Richard. Cahn explains the significance of this supernatural power to judge the guilty: “the ghosts, such as the young princes whom Richard ordered killed are creations of his conscience, and as such they may be regarded as manifestations of guilt” (317). Although it is possible that the ghosts appear because of Richard’s guilt instead of inspiring it, the Duchess of York calls upon these same two princes to avenge their deaths against Richard: “there the little souls of Edward’s children / Whisper the spirits of thine enemies, / And promise them success and victory” (4.4.192-94). Furthermore, these ghosts do not haunt Richard singularly; they also appear to Richmond to bless his plight in the ensuing battle. Prior makes this comparison: “The polar opposition between the two is dramatically stated in the scene of the ghosts, as each victim of Richard first haunts the evil genius who took his life, and then blesses the sleeping figure who has come to defeat Richard and save his country” (310). In this scene it is evident that not only have supernatural beings judged Richard for his actions, but they have also chosen to support his opponent, further condemning his efforts to retain his crown.

Deformity marks characters that are evil, and it is supernatural power to which is attributed the burden of turning evil into a physical manifestation. Richard determines that Queen Margaret is deformed for her cursing and plotting against the other characters in the play; he calls her a “Foul wrinkled witch” (1.3.163). Comparatively, Richard also admits to his own deformity, caused by supernatural forces at his premature birth:

I that am rudely stamped and want love’s majesty

To strut before a wanton ambling nymph,
 I that am curtailed of this fair proportion,
 Cheated of feature by dissembling nature,
 Deformed, unfinished, sent before my time
 Into this breathing world scarce half made up--
 And that so lamely and unfashionable
 That dogs bark at me as I halt by them. (1.1.16-23)

Richard insinuates that supernatural powers deformed him by sending him into the “breathing world,” supposedly from the spiritual world, marked as an evil creature. Prior acknowledges the significance of Richard’s deformity: “. . . the deformities which he owed to his prodigious birth were shaped and disciplined for his evil mission by the vicious and fiercely cruel world of strife into which he was born” (301). Richard emphasizes the power of supernatural creatures to cause deformities:

I pray you all, tell me what they deserve
 That do conspire my death with devilish plots
 Of damnèd witchcraft, and that have prevailed
 Upon my body with their hellish charms? (3.4.59-62)

Lady Anne contrasts Richard’s devilish deformity and the purity of Prince Edward and King Henry: “my other angel husband / And that dear saint which when I weeping followed --” (4.1.68-69). This is similar to the comparison between Macbeth and Duncan in Macbeth. Lady Anne also acknowledges the power of supernatural beings to cause deformity when she curses Richard:

More direful hap betide that hated wretch

That makes us wretched by the death of thee
 Than I can wish to wolves, to spiders, toads,
 Or any creeping renamed thing that lives.
 If ever he have child, abortive be it,
 Prodigious, and untimely brought to light,
 Whose ugly and unnatural aspect
 May fright the hopeful mother at the view. (1.2.17-24)

Anne curses Richard's children to be deformed in the way that Oberon and Titania determine that the unborn children in A Midsummer Night's Dream will not be deformed. It is in this manner that the supernatural realm is called upon to intervene and judge the guilty by marking them with deformity as well as to judge the innocent and reward them with physical perfection.

The ghosts in Richard III that haunt Richard on the battlefield succeed in forcing him to acknowledge his crimes. He realizes the effect the ghosts have had on his conscience when he wakes after the apparitions have left him: "Have mercy, Jesu! –Soft, I did but dream. / O coward conscience, how dost thou afflict me? / The lights burn blue" (5.5.132-34). Richard's account of the blue lights is an indication in Elizabethan England that a ghostly apparition had been present. It is ironic that Richard, characterized as the devil incarnate throughout the play, calls upon Jesus to save him from the ghosts who want retribution for their murders. Farnham describes this scenario: "Richard III is the ambitious villain in fullest development, made into a tragic hero. As he seizes and attempts to hold a kingship he is moved by delight in evil-doing almost as much as by ambition, but not so much as to be kept from eventually having an attack of conscience"

(140). As in Macbeth, the supernatural power to determine the guilty constitutes the death of the villain. Clarence admits that he deserves to die for the evil crimes he has committed:

. . . often did I strive
To yield the ghost, but still the envious flood
Stopped –in my soul and would not let it forth
To find the empty, vast, and wand’ring air,
But smothered it within my panting bulk. (1.4.36-40)

He relates that when he had been injured in battle, he tried to yield his soul unto the spiritual world; however, his wounds were not fatal, they did not take his life. Richard also must die for his actions. The supernatural beings in the play facilitate this retribution through Richmond as they each appear to him and bless him in battle against Richard. Jones supports the necessity of Richard’s death despite the onset of his conscience: “As Elizabeth had pointed out to him, as Margaret had exultantly proclaimed, and as every emphatically punctuated instance of retribution in the play makes clear, Richard’s past has ‘determined’ (in Buckingham’s accurate term) his end. And the past catches up with him at Bosworth Field” (41). Unlike Oberon, Puck and Prospero who commit less severe crimes, Richard’s actions constitute his death.

Supernatural beings have the power to judge the guilty, extract remorse, define evil with deformity, and compel repentance or death. In Macbeth, A Midsummer Night’s Dream, The Tempest, and Richard III characters are all influenced by the power of the supernatural. Cahn comments on the power of supernatural characters: “Such is Shakespeare’s strategy whenever he invokes supernatural figures. Theatrically, they

provide irresistible energy. Thematically, they enlighten our sense of ourselves, as we see our lives and values reflected in a mysterious, ultimately unknowable, universe that surrounds our own” (323). It is as a representation for Elizabethan belief in the supernatural that makes Shakespearian drama particularly interesting in terms of the power Shakespeare invests in supernatural characters.

Conclusion

In Macbeth, A Midsummer Night's Dream, The Tempest, and Richard III the supernatural is represented as occurring in abundance in the everyday life of sixteenth century society. Each of these plays is a demonstration of the power allocated to supernatural influence, as supernatural characters or ordinary characters with supernatural power manipulate, provoke ambition, create illusions, and judge the actions of the other characters. The power of supernatural characters in Shakespeare is significant, according to Woodbridge, because, "Shakespeare and his audience belonged to a culture that believed in magic and many forms of the supernatural" (11). Although there are people in modern society who appreciate supernatural elements they are not generally accepted as part of everyday life. This makes Shakespearian drama, as a representative of Elizabethan society's views on the supernatural, a unique insight into a different culture.

The manipulation of life forces is a major demonstration of supernatural power. Macbeth is manipulated by the witches and by Lady Macbeth. Theseus, Egeus, Oberon, Puck, and Titania all use supernatural power to control other human characters. Prospero manipulates spiritual beings, humans, and the natural elements in The Tempest. Richard manipulates characters using supernatural power, as Margaret and Anne summon supernatural beings to manipulate the natural elements and displace Richard.

Ambition motivates characters to desire supernatural power. The characters in these four plays want power for vengeance or dominance over other characters. Macbeth desires to be king and embraces supernatural power in order to achieve his goal. Oberon desires to establish his power over Titania and uses his supernatural powers to manipulate the plot. Prospero desires to be restored to his dukedom and uses his

supernatural powers to force the other characters into submission. Richard III desires to be king and imposes his supernatural reputation to intimidate the other characters.

The power to create illusion is the privilege of supernatural characters. In the four plays, supernatural encounters are often explained by humans as “dreams.” Other illusions test the sanity of main characters. Some characters are physically changed, and all of the settings for supernatural occurrences encourage isolation and mystery. In Macbeth characters dream of prophecies, Macbeth is driven insane by manifestations of guilt, the witches transform their physical shape, and both the beach and Glamis support the supernatural events. In A Midsummer Night’s Dream, characters and the audience are told that they were dreaming, Theseus questions the sanity of characters who have such dreams, Oberon and Puck use transformation to aid in the confusion of the plot, and the woods host all of the supernatural occurrences. In The Tempest characters relate their experience as a dream, Prospero tests the sanity of his victims, Trinculo and Caliban are transformed into a monster, and the island gives Prospero an arena for his magic. In Richard III ghosts haunt the dreams of other characters, Richard is transformed because of his evil plans, and Bosworth Field on All Souls Day facilitates supernatural events.

Supernatural characters have the power to inspire feelings of remorse and determine the guilty. Ghosts appear to scare characters to insanity and remorse. The guilty become deformed devils. In some cases, reformation is achieved; in others, the price of an evil soul is death. Macbeth is driven to remorse but must die for his crimes. Richard is provoked to remorse by his fear of the ghosts’ prophecy but dies, like Macbeth, for his actions. Shakespeare represents characters who legitimately feel remorse and characters who only regret being punished. Oberon and Puck beg the

pardon of their audience for their mischievous tricks and are permitted to live because they didn't actually hurt anyone. Similarly, Prospero renounces his power, asks the audience for forgiveness, and lives.

The contemporary reader's struggle to appreciate the significance of Shakespeare's adaptation of supernatural power in his plays, according to Clery, is that "drama which included gross improbabilities like ghosts and fairies, or promiscuously mixed comedy and tragedy, threatened to lapse from the role of instruction and elevation to mere unredeemed entertainment" (64). However, the supernatural elements in Macbeth, A Midsummer Night's Dream, The Tempest, and Richard III contribute to the thematic presentation. Summers describes Shakespeare without supernatural characters: "We can believe, for example, in Macbeth's witches, and tremble at their spells; but had we been informed, at the conclusion of the piece that they were only three of his wife's chambermaids disguised for the purpose of imposing on the Thane's credulity, it would have added little to the credibility of the story, and entirely deprived it of interest" (140). The reason why the modern reader is less receptive to the supernatural force in Shakespeare is explained by E. J. Clery in The Rise of Supernatural Fiction, 1762-1800: "In modern times this source of inspired feeling has been cut off; the invisible world that Shakespeare knew so familiarly has been 'un-known,' falsified and disallowed by reason" (147). It is for this reason that supernatural elements in Shakespeare should be taken at face value for the significance of meaning that the supernatural inspired in Elizabethan audiences.

In Shakespearian drama, supernatural characters and ordinary characters with supernatural power had the ability to manipulate, incite ambition, facilitate illusion, and

pass judgment. These characters created by Shakespeare are tangible, appearing on stage as physical manifestations, unlike the playwright's representation of Christianity in which God is only referred to and never appears. The fact that the supernatural is represented in all categories of Shakespearian drama: tragedy, comedy, romance, and history indicate the general acceptance of the supernatural in the everyday lives of Elizabethans.

Woodbridge comments on this supernatural presence: "Shakespeare's work, like his age, is a fabric whose rationality, realism, skepticism, and worldliness often strike us as modern; but there's magic in the web of it" (42). This "magic" reflects a belief in the supernatural that does not exist as common knowledge accepted by masses of people in modern society and, therefore, provides an interesting insight for the modern reader into the Elizabethan culture in which the supernatural had so much power.

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