The Syllables of Time: An Augustinian Context for *Macbeth* 5.5

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Among the most familiar lines in all Shakespeare are these Macbeth utters upon hearing of Lady Macbeth’s death:

Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day
To the last syllable of recorded time,
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!
Life’s but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
And then is heard no more. It is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.

(5.5.19–28)\(^1\)

So familiar, indeed, is this speech that we may easily overlook one striking correlation the imagery develops: that between syllables and time. Perhaps the phrasing “recorded time” conditions us to hear “time” as the simple equivalent of “history” or even “speech.” But Shakespeare’s precise phrase is “syllable of recorded time.” Nowhere else does Shakespeare associate time with syllables.\(^2\)

The comparison is familiar, however, in a famous Patristic instance—Augustine’s *Confessions*, Book XI. Yet no editor or critic has noted the resemblance between the phrase “syllable of recorded time” and *The Confessions’* excursus on time, which unfolds the nature of time past, present, and future by analogy to the syllables of speech. Nor has anyone noted another
possible echo from *The Confessions* in the same speech— that between Macbeth's "tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow" and Augustine's "cras et cras." In this essay, I want first to argue that Macbeth's phrases echo Augustine's and then to draw out some critical insights that this correlation yields. Augustine's analysis of time turns out to be highly suggestive of Macbeth's despair. For like Macbeth, *The Confessions* glances at a world in which speech and time disintegrate into a mere succession of disjointed sounds and moments, respectively; a world in which there is no coherence through time but only atomized, fragmented bits of time and sound, "signifying nothing."

I

According to C. A. Patrides and G. F. Waller, the most important influence on sixteenth- and seventeenth-century conceptions of time is Augustine, especially *The City of God* and *The Confessions* (Patrides 408; Waller 18). Both works were widely known in the Renaissance, exerting not only direct but doubtless indirect influence upon notions of time in an age newly interested in time as a philosophical concept (Quinones 1-27). As several book-length studies have argued, Shakespeare's poems and plays reflect much of this fresh interest in time (see Quinones, Waller, Turner, Sypher).

Although contemporary educational practices provide no evidence that *The Confessions* figured prominently in ordinary English grammar school curriculum (see Baldwin, Simon, Watson), the trend of Humanist education in Shakespeare's life was away from the schoolmen and back to the Church Fathers, including Augustine (Simon 70, 83). Nearly every Tudor prince was taught Augustine. James VI of Scotland, for whom *Macbeth* was subsequently composed, was presented a copy of *The Confessions* as early as 1576 (Baldwin 1:547). The same edition, intriguingly, was reprinted in 1604 just before *Macbeth* was composed. Shakespeare would not have lacked opportunity to become acquainted with *The Confessions*. As H. R. D. Anders speculates, citing a quotation from *The City of God* that appears in *Henry V*, Shakespeare may have picked up the phrase from a number of sources, including sermons, table talk, and collections (*Shakespeare's Books*, cited in Baldwin 2.600-01).

As with any text of the first order in the history of Western thought, Augustine's *Confessions* was so widely known and read over such a long period of time that it is nearly impossible to isolate specific currents of influence within the larger flow of intellectual history, especially for an author so comprehensive as Shakespeare. That Shakespeare assimilated much of *The Confessions* either firsthand or by hearsay has seemed, all the same, a likely supposition to many critics. Foremost among these, as one would suspect, is Roy Battenhouse, whose commentary on Augustine preceded by several years his book on the Christian premises of Shakespearean tragedy.
Augustine's famous meditation in Book XI on the mystery of past, present, and future time as manifested in the syllables of speech. The brief phrase "syllabis temporum" in Book XIII serves, in fact, to reprise this earlier, much fuller analysis of time—an analysis richly suggestive for Macbeth.

II

“What, then, is time?” asks Augustine in The Confessions and then concedes, “If no one asks me, I know; but, if I want to explain it to someone who does ask me, I do not know” (XI.14). Despite his professed bafflement, Augustine is, in the judgment of one commentator, “the first thinker to take time seriously” since the great Greek philosophers (Hausheer 512). The nature of time raises serious theological as well as philosophical problems for Augustine, who believes God to be at once immutable and yet the Author of an emphatically mutable world. The question arises (to borrow Hopkins’s language) as to how He whose beauty is past change can father-forth a world of dappled things—a world so infinitely various and manifestly changeable (“Pied Beauty”; cf. Conf. XI.5). Creation’s mutability in contrast to the Creator’s immutability, then, constitutes one aspect of the theological problem of time with which Augustine wrestles.

Further, the creation of any heaven and earth (mutable or not) presents Augustine with theological problems, for the creative act itself implies that God changes, at one point feeling no inclination to create and at another creating. Hence the potentially derisive question Augustine imagines hearing from those “full of their old carnal nature who say to us, ‘What was God doing before he made heaven and earth?’” (XI.10). (Except that he takes the question so seriously, Augustine is tempted to answer the skeptics with the retort: “He was preparing hell...for those prying into such deep subjects” [XI.12].) The doctrine of divine immutability, so fundamental to his theology, is at stake in Augustine’s explication of the nature of time.

Of time’s nature, Augustine presents in fact two explanations (Dyson passim). The first is that God creates time in the same manner and (to borrow from the language of time) at the same instant as He created the heavens and the earth. This view is expressed most succinctly in the following formulation from The City of God: “Undoubtedly, then, the world was made not in time but together with time” (XI.6; cf. Conf. XI.13–14, 30). This first approach to the nature of time treats time metaphysically, as an entity of the physical universe. The second account of time Augustine develops, the one that most concerns us here, regards time cognitively, as an aspect of consciousness. In this part of his analysis, past, present, and future are held not to “exist” at all except as dimensions of the mind.

Augustine spends little effort proving the nonexistence of past and future. That they do not exist follows almost by definition, for to exist is to occupy
a present, which is, with respect to the past and the future, a contradiction in terms (XI.14). The problem of what William James calls the “specious present” (Dyson 225)—that is, its vanishing dimensionality—engages Augustine more seriously than the ontology of past and future. He explains the present’s infinite regressiveness through his own version of Zeno’s paradox, applied now not to space but to time. What is the duration of time present, he asks. Is it a century? a year? a month? a day? an hour? a minute? the most minute moment? No, for all of these durations may themselves be subdivided into past and future. But if the present is none of these, then “the present has no space” (XI.15 “nullum habet spatium”), which contradicts the very nature of time, elsewhere defined as extension (“distentio”). How, then, may the past, present, and future be said to exist? Only in the mind. Consequently, there is really only the present: the present of the past (memory), the present of the present (perception), and the present of the future (expectation) (XI.20).

This recognition that “time is nothing more than distention, but of what thing I know... if it is not of the mind itself” (XI.26), draws Augustine’s meditation toward the contemplation of time’s psychological reality. It leads him naturally to analyze the workings of his mind as it apprehends something that exists through time past, present, and future. Since speech exists primarily in time and only secondarily in space (as writing), language provides an ideal vehicle for Augustine to explore his theory that past, present, and future are extensions of the mind (XI.26).

Augustine first draws several examples from the scansion of quantitative verse. Quantitative prosody exemplifies all the problems of time he is considering. In order to measure long and short syllables, one is required to make comparisons about syllables which do not, strictly speaking, exist—since they disappear as the speaker’s voice fades and await to be born until a reader gives them utterance. An abyss of silence surrounds every discrete syllable. Consequently, the only way to measure quantitative verse is by means of a mind capable of holding the past of memory and the future of expectation in a shared present. The simultaneity of past and future in a comprehensive present is, of course, precisely Augustine’s point.

What is true for syllables in a word is, of course, equally true for words in a sentence. This thought twice brings Augustine to explicate the nature of time by analyzing the function of past, present, and future in the act of reciting a psalm (XI.27, 28). Here is the central passage from this famous analysis:

I am about to recite a psalm that I know. Before I begin, my expectation extends over the entire psalm. Once I have begun, my memory extends over as much of it as I shall separate off and assign
to the past. The life of this action of mine is distended into memory by reason of the part I have spoken and into forethought by reason of the part I am about to speak. But attention is actually present and that which was to be is borne along by it so as to become past. The more this is done and done again, so much the more is memory lengthened by a shortening of expectation, until the entire expectation is exhausted. When this is done the whole action is completed and passes into memory.

(XI.28)

Thus human speech—our astonishing ability to generate and decode syntactically coherent sounds, sounds infinitely divisible into particles of mere noise—requires a mind capable of holding past, present, and future in a comprehensive present. Such minds must necessarily participate, though in a modest way, in the Divine’s eternal nature, which likewise holds past, present, and future before it in a single present. As Book XI ends, our ordinary capacity for language becomes infused with religious implications, for to speak or understand even the simplest sentence depends on assurance of things past and faith in things to come (Grant 7–8). Not surprisingly, Augustine concludes Book XI with moving prayers to God as the guarantor of order and meaning.

Yet within the Bishop’s prayers one detects anxiety, anxiety regarding the possible atomization of speech and time into meaningless bits of noise and duration. Augustine’s argument implies that only our fragile and flawed capacities for memory, perception, and expectation—by which humans correlate past and future with an infinitely disappearing present—makes speech and even selfhood possible. Only this stands between us and madness. Normatively, to be sure, “[t]ime means orientation, organization, co-ordination, purpose, coherence, wholeness . . . order, development, remembrance, progress, survey, expectation, confidence” (Breuer 257–58). Without these, however, speech would become a mere concatenation of sounds and existence a meaningless sequence of moments—both “signifying nothing.” Implicit in Augustine’s analysis of time and speech lies the threat of Babel, both linguistic and spiritual.

Augustine himself recognizes that his analysis of syntactic coherence applies to larger coherences as well, including that wholeness we call our lives:

What takes place in the whole psalm takes place also in each of its parts and in each of its syllables.
The same thing holds for a longer action, of which perhaps the psalm is a small part. *The same thing holds for a man’s entire life*, the parts of which are all the man’s actions. *The same thing holds throughout the whole age of the sons of men*, the parts of which are the lives of all men.

(XI.28; my italics)

It seems telling that the man who virtually invents autobiography for Western literature should recognize that “man’s entire life” must be read like a sentence. An autobiographer must fashion potentially inchoate experience into ordered narrative. His introspective project educates him intimately in the knowledge that coherence cannot be assumed but must be achieved, that our sense of self is constantly imperilled by fragmentation and disintegration.

Augustine’s logic of infinite regression, when applied to biography (“man’s entire life”) or history (“the whole age of the sons of men”), implies that human life may become the existential equivalent of a stutter or of a garbled madman’s tale. Just as the coherent string of phonemes we recognize as a sentence may be atomized into incoherent syllables, so the duration we call our lives may become fragmented into the “mass of meaninglessly multiplying moments” that Beckett describes in Endgame. Beckett’s image, deriving from Zeno, applies to both The Confessions and Macbeth: “Moment upon moment, patting down like the millet grains of . . . that old Greek [i.e., Zeno], and all life long you wait for that to mount up to a life” (Breuer 258).

The conclusion of Book XI brings Augustine face to face with a central mystery of temporality: his selfhood, no less than his speech, is threatened by atomization into incoherent and meaningless particles. Seeming to sense the fragile coherence of the life he has tried to shape into narrative, Augustine confesses at the end of his mediation on time: “But I am distracted amid times ['in tempora dissilui'], whose order I do not know, and my thoughts, the inmost bowels of my soul, are torn asunder by tumult and change. . . .” (XI.29). Vernon J. Bourke captures “dissilui’s” sense of spiritual fragmentation even more forcibly: “But, I have disintegrated into periods of time, of whose order I am ignorant.” One’s own life may become to oneself no more than a crazy concatenation of incidents, like syllables without syntax, a play without a plot. No wonder Augustine at this point turns longingly from the paradoxes of temporality to the promise of eternity, when “being purged and melted clear by the fire of your [God’s] love, I may flow altogether into you” (XI.29). Having glimpsed the fearful atomistic abyss which threatens to engulf time-bound man, the Bishop of Hippo concludes his meditation on time with a prayer to escape time, with its constant threat
of disintegration, and to be immersed in eternity—presumably an eternity in which he, like the angels, will read the divine countenance “without any syllables of time” (XIII.15).

III

Macbeth and his wife find no such escape from time, though they both yearn for it. Both secretly hope to enjoy an eternal present, free from the complications of past horrors and future fears. Instead, they both discover (to their grief) the Augustinian truth that as memory and as expectation, past and future inevitably intrude upon the present. Condemned to reenact Duncan’s murder night after night, Lady Macbeth comes to experience the past as eternally present in hellish memory; compelled to redouble his butchery day after day, her husband comes to feel the future (tomorrow) as emptied of hope by the weary expectation that it holds nothing but the senseless repetition of a sordid present. For Macbeth and his lady, time finally loses all sense of meaningful sequentiality, as Augustine hints it might. Its syllables are bereft of syntax, like a garbled madman’s tale—“full of sound and fury” but “signifying nothing.”

Ironically, both Macbeth and Lady Macbeth seek the very condition from which they later suffer. For if ultimately the disintegration of time is symptomatic of their diseased minds, initially such fragmentation conforms to deeply shared desires. From the outset, Macbeth recognizes that his assault upon Duncan also constitutes a campaign against time’s flow. In his first extended soliloquy, he wonders whether this “blow / Might be the be-all and end-all—here, / But here, upon this bank and shoal of time” (1.7.4-6). In this reflection, Macbeth momentarily indulges in a seductive if vain fantasy of severing past, present, and future through a deed that is so absolutely past (“done when ’tis done”) as to never flow into future (“consequence”). Though he immediately recognizes this view of time as illusory (1.7.7-12), the desire to dissever past, present, and future goes very deep in Macbeth. Indeed, Macbeth’s entire career after Duncan’s murder may be seen as an attempt to seal off past deeds by making them thoroughly done and to obstruct or control future consequences. This subversive campaign against time’s cohesion lends great weight to Macbeth’s casual self-characterizations as one who would “mock” and “master” time (1.7.82; 3.1.40).

In similar language, Lady Macbeth early on urges her husband to “beguile the time” (1.5.63). She frequently appeals to Macbeth’s fantasy of performing a deed that is “done when ’tis done” by propounding a crudely compartmental view of time. For example, her reassurance that “What’s done is done” (3.2.14) echoes the first words of Macbeth’s soliloquy, only without his conditional “if” to indicate doubt that the past can be lopped off from
present and future. She tends to regard time matter-of-factly, prosaically
supposing that "A little water clears us of this deed"—as if the past can be
hermetically sealed off as only past, as if the past can properly be conceived
as a sort of black hole into which deeds disappear.

Both Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, then, futilely hope to arrest time's
meaningful forward motion; both share a certain arrogance about "mocking"
and "mastering" time; and both are seduced by the fantasy of absolute
closure—that is, by the illusion that it is possible to do a deed that truly
constitutes a "be-all and end-all," an action wholly and utterly "done when
'tis done" (1.7.1). We might call this shared dream of absolute closure the
Macbeths' fantasy of perfection. Macbeth and his wife suppose that action
can be perfected in the root sense of the word—"perfectum," thoroughly
or completely done. Upon learning that Fleance has escaped the hired
assassins, Macbeth says, revealingly: "I had else been perfect, / Whole as the
marble" (3.4.21-22; cf. 3.1.107). In this odd but telling phrase, "perfect"
retains its etymological significance, "completely done,"—the sense still
preserved in the grammatical nomenclature of "perfect" (completed
action) and "imperfect" (incompleted action) tenses. Macbeth and his
wife hope to relegate their deed to the pluperfect tense, as it were, to a past
"plus quam perfectum."

The Macbeths' illusion that evil action can be thus perfected, however,
depends upon the assumption that time exists only metaphysically, not
cognitively. Lady Macbeth's commonsensical claim "what's done is done"
(3.2.14; cf. 1.7.1) presumes that the past disappears into a dimension wholly
separate from the present and the future. For her the past is akin to a place,
a hole into which she can dump her bloody deed and leave it behind, free
and clean again—a sort of temporal rubbish bin. Such ontology presupposes
that past and future exist outside the self in mutually exclusive compartments.
It completely ignores the psychological reality of past and future—namely
their presence in the mind as memory and as expectation. It follows that
to deny the coherence of time—as Lady Macbeth does in separating the past
from the present—is to deny coherence to one's own life and thus to one's
self. The attempt to live without such coherence leads to madness and
despair. For as Augustine knew and as the Macbeths discover, past, present,
and future are inextricably bound in a continuum—if in no other way, at
least in our minds.

As memory, the past forever trammels the Macbeths' present joys: witness,
for instance, the interrupted banquet scene (3.4) and the sleepwalking scene
(5.1). As expectation, the future spoils present satisfaction: witness Macbeth's
soliloquy "Our fears in Banquo stick deep" (3.1) and his vision of Banquo's
heirs (4.1). In Macbeth, both the past and the future vitiate the present. Like
Banquo's ghost, the past can never be laid wholly to rest but looms up to
haunt Macbeth's present:
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.
(3.4.80-82)

Likewise in a parallel scene (4.1), Macbeth discovers that the future cannot be "jumped" but, like the specters of Banquo's posterity, rises up to frustrate Macbeth's dynastic ambitions.

Macbeth reveals the many ways time stubbornly refuses to be contained in a perfect tense. What's done is never finally done in the play, never "perfectum." Rather, it must be done, and done, and done again. No play in the entire canon uses "do" and its preterit "done" more frequently or with greater emphasis than Macbeth. These words toll through the play like a knell, at first sounding the murderers' desire to dispose of evil in a past that remains only past (past perfect) and later mocking that same perfectionist desire of those who themselves thought to "mock the time" (1.7.82).

Thus the echoes of "done" mock Lady Macbeth. Her prosaic shrug, "What's done is done" (3.2.14), recurs as she is sleepwalking, her words now recast in a tragic formulation: "What's done cannot be undone" (5.1.67). Likewise, her glib reassurance to Macbeth, "A little water clears us of this deed./How easy is it then!" (2.2.64-65), is ironically reprised in her tragic lament: "All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand" (5.1.49-51). What's done is never done: every night she must again "smear/The sleepy grooms with blood" (2.2.47-48); every night wash her bloody hands; every night hear the dreadful knocking at the gate and lead her shaken husband to bed; every night smooth over their guilt with a banality, now full of tragic portent, "What's done cannot be undone."

Likewise, Duncan's murder is never fully done for Macbeth, even though as he returns from the guest's chamber, grasping daggers still dripping with Duncan's hot blood, his first utterance is "I have done the deed" (2.2.14). Far from being done, however, the deed has just begun; Macbeth is still "young in deed" (3.4.145). Like his wife, Macbeth discovers that Duncan's murder can never be brought to closure, for "Blood will have blood" (3.4.123). Yet, in an increasingly mad effort to achieve diabolical "perfection," Macbeth multiplies the violence. He characteristically does so, moreover, by striking out against not individuals but families, the human expression of continuity through time.

In this lies the deep significance of the gratuitous butchery at Fife. The attack upon Macduff's family continues Macbeth's campaign against time launched at Duncan's murder; it extends Macbeth's ferocious effort to "master time" (cf. 3.1.40):
The castle of Macduff I will surprise,
Seize upon Fife, give to th' edge o' th' sword
His wife, his babe, and all unfortunate souls
That trace him in his line.

(4.1.150-53)

Macbeth always attacks an entire family line. A child killer, he is obsessed with the survival of his victims' children. In part, Macbeth's infanticide may be explained by fear of revenge. But finally his compulsion to wipe out clans, root and branch, seems to lie deeper than any practical fear of vendetta. Children, families threaten Macbeth's perfectionist fantasy of absolute completion. Because he would be "perfect / Whole as marble," he feels compelled to eradicate everyone that traces his victims in their lines.

However, despite Lady Macbeth's effort to ignore time's continuity and Macbeth's active assault upon it, time works its inexorable will upon them. Past, present, and future prove themselves to be part of a continuous whole, while all human action shows itself to be manifestly imperfect: Ghosts return, children escape, Lady Macbeth relives the murder night after night in troubled dreams, her husband redoubles murder day after day in a nightmare of butchery from which not only he but all Scotland longs to wake so that it may know itself again (cf. 4.3.164 ff.). In countless ways, time frustrates the Macbeths' perfectionist fantasy and denies them their secret dream of living wholly in the present. At last, past and future completely canker the Macbeths' present; they have, in effect, no real present. Or rather, Lady Macbeth knows only the present of the past, memory—the wretched memories of a "mind diseas'd" (5.3.41); and Macbeth knows only the present of the future, expectation—the weary expectation of "tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow" which stretches before him in an absurd cycle of fear and violence.

In these closing scenes, we feel that the protagonists have entered into a living Hell. Fittingly, their inferno is one of broken, cyclical time. Having denied the coherence of time, they are condemned to experience time as merely repetitive, devoid of purposeful sequentiality, disintegrated, cyclical. Their final suffering evokes the fates of Sisyphus and Tantalus, classical ciphers for endlessly incompeted action in cyclical time. Lady Macbeth's recurring nightmares and Macbeth's repeated violence (committed in the name of containing violence) likewise describe cyclical actions emptied of meaning and void of hope for completion.

By Act 5, both protagonists are trapped in a meaningless cycle of days, whose numbing absurdity may well recall Augustine's "tomorrow and tomorrow" and whose incoherence echoes his analysis of the "syllables of time." When Macbeth alludes to "the last syllable of recorded time," he has come to feel the full horror of the disintegration Augustine but
glimpses in his admission, "I have disintegrated into periods of time, of whose order I am ignorant" (XI.29). To quote a modern analysis,

Time has become entropic for Macbeth. History, "recorded time," is no longer the edifying volume capable of unravelling the muddle of man's life; it is the incoherent stutter of fragmentary syllables which will never again be compounded in a neat pattern of meaningful sentences... its disintegration, therefore, is consequently represented as the incoherent gabble of a madman.

(Breuer 263)

In order to understand this condition, one need not refer to modernist ideas about entropy or the absurd. Long before the twentieth century, Augustine had penetrated and exposed the connection between temporal and linguistic coherence. Although it is impossible to prove beyond doubt that Shakespeare had The Confessions in mind as he composed the final scene of his play about the consequences of evil and the breaking of time, Macbeth's language does, whether intentionally or not, echo Augustine's phrases "cras et cras" and "sylabibus temporum." Moreover, the more fully we consider the context of these phrases in The Confessions—the matrix of ideas about time and the self in which they are embedded—the more appropriate seems an Augustinian gloss to one of Shakespeare's most famous speeches.

NOTES

1. All citations from Shakespeare are taken from David Bevington's edition. Unless otherwise noted, all English quotations from The Confessions are taken from John K. Ryan's translation.
2. This may easily be verified in Spevack.
3. This conclusion is based upon a review of all significant scholarly editions of the play as well as studies of its sources. For a survey of the scholarship to mid-century on Macbeth's sources, see Muriel C. Bradbrook.
4. The first complete English translation by Sir Tobias Matthew did not appear till shortly after Shakespeare's death. Openly recusant in its preface and notes, Matthew's translation was soon answered by William Watt's aggressively Anglican translation, for years the standard English edition.
5. More fancifully, one might even postulate other distant echoes from The Confessions in Shakespeare's plays. For instance, Leonato's throw-away wisdom that "there was never yet philosopher / That could endure a toothache patiently" (ADO 5.1.35-36) may simply be a folk-wisdom embedded in the play, or it might recall Augustine's toothache (Conf. IX.4). Similarly, Hamlet's self-accusation over the actor's tears for Hecuba seems strangely reminiscent of Augustine's self-castigation at weeping over the story of Dido rather than over his own sins (Conf. I.13).
6. For a classic discussion of the play in terms of these issues, see Helen Gardner's essay on *Macbeth* and the theme of damnation in Elizabethan tragedy.

7. Elsewhere it is clear Augustine believes that our temporality condemns us never to fully make sense of history (*De vera rel.* XXII. 43). Because we are part of history, we cannot distance ourselves from it sufficiently to comprehend its totality, as we can a poem. In explicating Augustine's semiology, Eugene Vance recently observed: "Man labors, then, in a poem of history that he cannot read as a whole" (47; see his chapter "Saint Augustine: Language as Temporality"). The same analysis, of course, obtains for one's own life, from which one can also never stand completely apart in order to apprehend as a whole.

8. Significant treatments of the disintegration of time in *Macbeth* are to be found in the work of Stephen Spender, J. Middleton Murray, G. Wilson Knight, L. C. Knights, M. M. Mahood, Barbara L. Parker, François Maguin, Horst Breuer, and Donald W. Foster. Though none of these critics remarks on the significance of Augustine's syllables of time to Macbeth's final soliloquy, many of them draw similar conclusions about the disjointing of time in *Macbeth*. Breuer's essay is particularly compatible with my analysis. Breuer, however, assumes a defensively a-historicist posture (see 257, 265-71) in order to justify importing Beckett into the play. If my thesis is correct, then most of the ostensibly modernist points Breuer draws about time and despair in *Macbeth* look back to Augustine (or Zeno) just as much as they point forward to Beckett.

9. See Donald W. Foster for a thorough discussion of "Macbeth's War on Time."

10. Taken together, the total number of appearances of "do," "done," and "deed" in *Macbeth* exceeds the total word count for these terms in any other play (see Spevack). Moreover, since *Macbeth* is such a short play, the words also appear more times per line in it than they do in plays with similar totals. "Done" occurs thirty-five times in *Macbeth* compared to thirty-six appearances in the sprawling *Antony and Cleopatra*. Similarly, Spevack lists fifteen occurrences of "deed" in the play compared to thirteen in the far longer *Richard III*. But frequency counts tell only half the story. Besides the sheer number of appearances, these words acquire peculiar and powerful resonances in *Macbeth*. They often occur in clusters and receive special emphasis by the lines' meter as well as meaning. For a good discussion of "done" and "perfect" in *Macbeth*, see Mahood 209-15 in Wain.

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