"Borrow'd Robes" and "Naked Frailties"; An Essay on the Theme and Dramatic Structure in Macbeth Viewed Mainly through Imagery*

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Since Caroline Spurgeon published Shakespeare's Imagery and What It Tells Us, a greater part of the important roles imagery plays in the works of Shakespeare has been made clear by some critics, although there was a critic, such as L. H. Hornstein, who raised objection to her theory, especially in that we can find a shadow of the dramatist's personality by examining the images employed in his drama. It is certainly true that her theory involves something which is likely to fall into the error or which is unimportant to interpretations of a drama itself. But if we consider imagery, as W. H. Clemen does in his book, The Development of Shakespeare's Imagery, as one of mechanics in an organic drama, in other words, as something which plays an "integral part of dramatic structure," Hornstein's objection above-mentioned becomes meaningless and, what is more, we can get

* This is a translation of my essay which I reported at the Eighteenth Meeting of The English Literary Society of Japan, Hokkaido Branch, October 11, 1973.
(2) e.g., W. H. Clemen, G. Wilson Knight, L. C. Knights, etc.
(3) He, by showing that the same images can be seen in Spenser as well, denies that the imagery "gives himself away." viz., "Analysis of Imagery: A Critique of Literary Method." PMLA LVII (1942), 638–53.
a useful key to the interpretation of an organic drama of Shakespeare.

A. C. Bradley’s work, *Shakespearean Tragedy*,(5) marked the zenith of what is called a “character criticism,” which, attaching importance to the dramatic elements of the Shakespeare’s works, examines the characterization of the *dramatis personae* in relation to the real world, with the result that, out of the reflection and critique of that method, another kind of Shakespearean criticism(6) has appeared, in which each drama of Shakespeare is treated as a piece of poetry. And this ‘imagery criticism’ of Clemen and others can be said to have a common foundation to the latter attitude. But it goes without saying that a Shakespeare’s work is neither a mere drama nor a mere poem, but a poetic drama, so we had better regard it as an entity having dramatic and poetic elements at once. In this essay, therefore, I will mainly analyse the images(7) Shakespeare uses in *Macbeth* on the premise that imagery is something equal to other elements in the drama, e. g. a plot, a character, preparation etc. Through the analyses of them, I will make clear the main theme and dramatic structure in *Macbeth* which is an entity with both dramatic and poetic elements.

When the curtain of *Macbeth* is raised, we see three supernatural

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(6) L. C. Knights’ criticism exemplifies that criticism.
(7) In this essay, I use the term ‘image,’ like Spurgeon, in the widest senses of the word. In her book, *op. cit.*, she uses it “as the only available word to cover every kind of simile, as well as every kind of what is really compressed simile—metaphor,” and thinks of it as “connoting any and every imaginative picture or other experience, drawn in every kind of way, which may have come to the poet, not only through any of his senses, but through his mind and emotions as well, and which he uses in the forms of simile and metaphor in their widest senses, for purposes of analogy.” (p. 5).
beings in "Thunder and lightning." They are all mysterious beings and the words they utter have more mysterious elements than their appearances, which seem to be beyond our comprehension. I think this strangeness comes from the image of paradoxical contradiction they have in their words.

When the battle's lost and won. (I. i. 4)
Fair is foul, and foul is fair. (I. i. 11) (8)

Truths of these paradoxes may be proved if we think of them as showing at once two value judgments viewed from two standpoints contrary to each other. To show two value judgments at a time is equal to equivocation, which will be apparent in a later part of the drama and prove to be a theme in this drama.

Such paradoxical ways of speaking are often repeated not only in the first act, but throughout the play. Thus in the first scene of the first act Shakespeare uses the images which overshadows a later part of the drama, especially a Porter-Scene immediately after the murder of Duncan, or which gives what Clemen calls preparation for the development of a plot. Through these images, together with the mysterious features of the three witches, one direction is already given to the drama and in this respect I totally agree with L. C. Knights, who says,

Each theme is stated in the first act. The first scene, every word of which will bear the closest scrutiny, strikes one dominant chord. (9)

(8) All my quotations from Macbeth in this essay are made from the Arden edition of the play, edited by Kenneth Muir, reprinted 1968.
In the following scene a picture of Macbeth combating with rebellious Macdonwald in the field is shown through the mouth of the Captain. And here also we have in our imagination paradoxical contradiction continued from the previous scene.

As whence the sun 'gins his reflection,
Shipwracking storms and direful thunders break,
So from that spring, whence comfort seem'd to come,
Discomfort swells. (I. ii. 25–28)

This image has some bearing upon a rebel of Macdonwald which bears a striking parallel to Macbeth's murder of Duncan, a treason, for the former was "a gentleman on whom I [Duncan] built/An absolute trust"; Duncan put his no less unshaken trust in him, than he puts in Macbeth. The man rebels; the unexpected thing comes from where least expected. Furthermore, the images of a 'storm and lightning' remind us of the Witches' words, "In thunder, lightning, or in rain," and they are closely bound up with the image of paradoxical contradiction in the Witches' words in the third scene. There is parallelism between these two paradoxical images of a storm in that in both cases a ship is "tempest-tost."

Though his bark cannot be lost,
Yet it shall be tempest-tost. (I. iii. 24–25)

Thus each image in Macbeth tends to keep a close mutual relationship to combine one dialogue with another, one scene with another, and one act with another act so as to help the development of a plot. In the introductory part of the drama, they produce a total atmosphere of the whole drama and gives preparation for the later representation of the plot. The contradicted way of speaking can be seen again in
the paradoxical and prophetic greetings of the three Witches towards Banquo:

Lesser than Macbeth, and greater. (I. iii. 65)
Not so happy, yet much happier.
Thou shalt get kings, though thou be none. (I. iii 66–67)

Banquo, as if influenced by a diabolic power latent in the Witches' words, utters surprised questions to them. But, unlike Macbeth, in his occasion, he is conscious of evil strangeness of their identity. So his words reflect his objective attitude towards the fiends.

What are these,
So wither'd and so wild in their attire,
That look not like th' inhabitors o' th' earth,
And yet on't? Live you? or are you aught
That man may question? You seem to understand me,
By each at once her choppy finger laying
Upon her skinny lips: you should be women,
And yet your beards forbid me to interpret
That you are so. (10) (I. iii. 39–47)

If we compare this attitude of Banquo with the words Macbeth utters for the first time when he actually appears on the stage, "So foul and fair a day I have not seen," (11) we are struck with the difference between basical attitude of Macbeth and that of Banquo towards the evil agents; Macbeth unconsciously reflects the "dominant chord" of Witches, their tone of a chaotic contradiction suggested by their expression, "Fair is foul, and foul is fair," while Banquo, although he cannot identify them either, keeps an objective attitude of a disinter-

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(10) The italics mine.
(11) Macbeth, op. cit., I. iii. 38.
ested observer with composure.

At this point most critics insist that Macbeth represents an evil power from the outset of the play. But I doubt that they are right. He is not a publicly or self-acknowledged villain, such as Richard III or Iago. The second scene, where the Captain draws a picture of Macbeth in the field is dotted with the bloody images here and there. The Captain reporting "of the revolt/The newest state" is bloody and bleeding himself, and the field drawn through his mouth is smeared with blood.

For brave Macbeth (well he deserves that name),
Disdaining Fortune, with his brandish'd steel,
Which smok'd with bloody execution. (I. ii. 16-18)
Till he unseam'd him from the nave to th'chops,
And fix'd his head upon our battlements. (I. ii. 22-23)
to bathe in reeking wounds,
Or memorize another Golgotha. (I. ii. 40-41)
The more bloody the picture of the field is, the more it praises Macbeth's bravery. Thus, they express greatness of Macbeth, on their surface, while, to be ironical enough, they suggest in a deeper level Macbeth's future treason, by representing rebellious Macdonwald as a man who was once a trustworthy gentleman. From the viewpoint of the effect upon the audience, they can catch sympathy with the hero, and at the same time we feel a close relation in each phase in the developments of the plot. Such an effect can be more clearly seen in Duncan's words which close the second scene:

What he hath lost, noble Macbeth hath won. (I. ii. 69)

They reach our ears with the resounding voices of the Witches in the beginning of the play, "When the battle's lost and won." Their direct meaning is clear: Noble Macbeth hath won the title, the Thane of Cawdor, which rebellious Macdonwald hath lost. But when we catch them with the conjuration-like resounding voices of the fiends, it seems to us that it was not only Macdonwald's title, the Thane of Cawdor, but also the latter's dishonourable title as a traitor that Macbeth "hath won." For the title given to Macdonwald in his last phase is, as Roy Walker points out,\(^{13}\) "That most disloyal traitor, the Thane of Cawdor," which is uttered by Rosse only a few minutes before Duncan's speech above-quoted. It does not follow, however, that Macbeth embodies an evil power from the outset of the play, for what I have mentioned just above is a kind of preparation for the future action of Macbeth, and that he fosters the idea that he will murder the king in order to usurp his royal throne is not virtually expressed, nor even suggested in the lines of the play, at least, until he says "So foul and fair a day I have not seen." Macbeth, till then, is depicted as an honourable brave soldier faithful to the King and no sign of guilty mind is shown in his action in the Captain's picture of him. About the time when he conceives the idea of usurpation we are made known for the first time by the following remark of Banquo, in which he uses again the image of contradicted expression.

Good, Sir, why do you start, and seem to fear
Things that do sound so fair? \(\text{(I. iii. 51–52)}\)

Macbeth does not recognize his indisposition to usurp the throne until he is greeted by the Third Witch, "All hail Macbeth, that shall be

\(^{13}\) Cf. his note to the sixty-eighth line, cited by K. Muir, *op. cit.*
King hereafter,” when he, foreseeing the murder of Duncan, shows his surprise and fear in his appearance. And then he endeavours to wipe away from his consciousness possibility of getting a crown which was informed of to him by the Witches’ paradoxical words. We feel such tendency of Macbeth’s mind through his sharp enquiry to Rosse, a messenger of the King’s will which proves that the second prophetic greeting came true, that Macbeth is given a title of the Thane of Cawdor, as “an earnest of greater honour.”

The Thane of Cawdor lives: why do you dress me
In borrow’d robes? (I. iii. 108–109)

This image of clothes, as Spurgeon points out, is repeatedly used throughout the play, and the same image is already used in the second scene where the Captain reports the state of the field: “Till he unseam’d him from the nave to th’chops.” To “unseam” means to rip up clothes etc, and here Captain says, using an analogy, that Macbeth cut open Macdonwald from the nave to the chops, as if he made a dress, cutting clothing material. Later, Macbeth himself uses the same image of clothes, comparing Macdonwald’s title of the Thane of Cawdor to “Robes.” It seems as if he stitched up a robe from the clothing material, Macdonwald. It can be inferred from this that Macbeth slaughtered Macdonwald, even if he was a rebellious villain, to obtain a new honour. As this honour is given to him as “an earnest of greater honour,” Macbeth has come to be unable to erase the consciousness that he might become a king, but still he has misgivings.

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(14) Cf. Coleridge’s remark upon the ‘start’, “a sign of guilty thoughts” cited by Muir, op. cit.
(16) Macbeth, op. cit., I. ii. 22.
in mind concerning the real identity of the Witches. Such doubtful state of his mind is shown in his soliloquy, in which he employes the paradoxical images above-said.

[Aside] 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.
My thought, whose murther yet is but fantastical,
Shakes so my single state of man,
That function is smother'd in surmise,
And _nothing is, but what is not._ (I. iii. 130–42)

An image of a raptured man in this soliloquy has been repeatedly employed since Banquo's description of absent-minded Macbeth when he shows the first sign of guilty mind, and in addition to that, Shakespeare shows here more concrete description of raptured Macbeth by giving the vivid movements of his trembling body. On the other hand, an image of an earnest when Macbeth was given a new honour is again repeated here. Moreover, we find it in Banquo's speech immediately before this soliloquy, and there, it is bound up with devilish equivocation.

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. (I. iii. 123–26)

(17) The italics mine.
Here also we can recognize the striking difference between Macbeth's and Banquo's attitude, that is to say, Macbeth is not aware that the Witches' prophecies are a kind of equivocation, and we know by the contradicted images shown in the expressions, "cannot be ill; cannot be good." and "nothing is, but what is not," that he is vacillating between two ideas about the "supernatural soliciting," and even if he takes it in either way he meets an contradiction and so he is at a loss what course to take. Even though he says Duncan's "murther yet is but fantastical," he shows a sign of advancement towards the crime in the paradoxical expression, "nothing is, but what is not."(18) Again as for the image of a raptured man, we know from Banquo's remarks which follows "Why do you start?" that Macbeth is enraptured by the prophetic greetings and furthermore, this image of a man in rapture appears again in Banquo's speech immediately after Macbeth's soliloquy.

My noble partner
You greet with present grace, and great prediction
Of noble having, and of royal hope,
That he seems rapt withal. (I. iii. 54-56)
Look, how our partner's rapt. (I. iii. 143)

Here Shakespeare shows us by the fact that it is Banquo who describes the confused ideas in Macbeth's mind, that Banquo, unlike the hero, is a cold on-looker concerning the mysterious and ambiguous prophecies. The same thing can be derived from another fact that Banquo refers to the new-purchased honour of Macbeth, again analoguing it to a garment unsuitable for Macbeth;

(18) Cf. Coleridge's remark upon the line, "a confirmation of the remark on the early birth-date of guilt." cited by Muir, op. cit.
New honours come upon him,
Like our strange garments, cleft not to their mould,
But with the aid of use.

(I. iii. 145-47)

Generally speaking, most of the images of clothes adapted to describe appearances of Macbeth are robes which are baggy, too large, and unsuitable for him as it is exemplified just above. Or as it is seen from "borrow'd robes," they are clothes which are unlawfully taken from other people. There are, among them, images which are bound up with a thief. In the image of the clothes seen in this quotation there is an element of unsuitableness because it is qualified by "But with the aid of use," and is it too minute to notice here that a "use" implies another meaning, 'a trust?' If so, it follows that the image has also an aspect that it is unlawfully taken from other people.

Macbeth, however, does not realize that a new robe is not suitable for his own body, as well as the Witches' equivocation. Here also we see one of the differences between him and Banquo. Accordingly, in the image of clothes he himself uses, though there is an element of newness there are no elements of unsuitableness or of unlawfulness. While Duncan is asleep in Macbeth's own castle of Inverness, he proposes a change of their enterprise to his "dearest partner of greatness", picturing its horribleness in his imagination, and then, he uses the same image that Banquo does, analogising the same title of his own to a garment. But there are no elements of unlawfulness or of unsuitableness in his image.

We will proceed no further in this business:

(9) Cf. 'use' "A trust or confidence reposed in a person for the holding of property, etc., of which another receives or is entitled to the profits or benefits." (O. E. D.).
He hath honour'd me of late; and I have bought
Golden opinions from all sorts of people,
Which would be worn now in their newest gloss,
Not cast aside so soon.  
(I. vii. 31–35)

Here he says he has bought "golden opinions," that is to say, he has got them lawfully. We can see their striking differences when we compare it with another image seen in a later stage, for example, the image employed when Angus describes Macbeth's state as follows:

Now does he feel his title
Hang loose about him, like a giant's robe
Upon a dwarfish thief.  
(V. ii. 20–22)

By the way, we find other important images in the first act that appear repeatedly throughout the play. These images are: 'a banquet or food', 'a book', 'buildings', 'a beast', 'a bird', 'a wasteful labour', 'a plant', 'slumber', 'a babe', etc. And all of these images are, directly or indirectly, related to the murder of Duncan, which I think marks a turning point of this drama. So these prepare for the deed when they appear in the first act, an introductory part of a drama, and later develop as the drama advances towards its climax.

It is an owl which tells "sternst-good night" in the middle of the night of the murder, and those who are guarding the Duncan's chamber are

the surfeited grooms [who]
Do mock their charge with snores:  
(II. ii. 5–6)

Macbeth murders sleeping Duncan and therfore he kills "innocent sleep" which is

(2) The italics mine.
great Nature's second course,
Chief nourisher in life's feast.  

Murdered Duncan is a "Lord's anointed Temple", whose life is compared to "The life o'th'building." The eye of Macbeth who fears too much to see the bloody body of Duncan again seems to Lady Macbeth to be

the eye of childhood
That fears a painted devil.  

What Macbeth has got by giving his own "eternal jewel" to a "common Enemy of man" are a "fruitless crown" and "a barren sceptre."

I will go on to analyse how those images are combined together to help the developments of the drama and organize its structure. Macbeth, enraptured with the prophetic greetings, tells a lie for the first time to smooth over his absent-mindedness. Then he thanks Angus and Rosse for the happy tidings they brought him, availing himself of an image of a book.

Kind gentlemen, your pains
Are register'd where every day I turn
The leaf to read them.  

This would be a pretentious image for qualifying those who merely delivered the King's will. In the like way, Hamlet compares memory of his Father's words to a volume of a book.

Yea, from the table of my memory
I'll wipe away all trivial fond records,
All saws of books, all forms, all pressures past
That youth and observation copied there,
And thy commandment all alone shall live
Within the book and volume of my brain.(21)

Compared with Hamlet's analogy, Macbeth's would be an image unbalanced with its contents. From this we can infer that he has already in mind the crown which he will obtain. On the other hand, Lady Macbeth advises her husband to look innocent to the world. For

Your face, my Thane, is as a book, where men
May read strange matters. (I. v. 62–63)

These two cases have in common the elements of superficial pretension and deception. The same thing can be inferred from the fact that the latter image is immediately followed by an image of a serpent under a flower.

look like th'innocent flower,
But be the serpent under't. (I. v. 64–65)

The qualities of superficiality and deception are attached to the image of a martlet employed in Banquo's appraisal of Inverness, a castle of Macbeth when Duncan arrives there with his attendants.

This guest of summer,
The temple-haunting martlet, does approve,
By his loved mansionry, that the heaven's breath
Smells wooingly here: no jutty, frieze,
Buttress, nor coign of vantage, but this bird
Hath made his pendent bed, and procreant cradle;
Where they most breed and haunt, I have observ'd
The air is delicate. (I. vi. 3–10)

Shakespeare uses the same image in *The Merchant of Venice*, in the scene where Arragon talks about foolishness of those who "choose by show," before he chooses one of the three caskets to take Portia to wife."(22)

(22) For the detailed explanation, see Spurgeon, *op. cit.*, 187–88.
What says the golden chest? ha! let me see,
"Who chooseth me, shall gain what many men desire,"
What many men desire,—that "many" may be meant
By the fool multitude that choose by show,
Not learning more than the fond eye doth teach,
Which pries not to the interior, but like the martlet
Builds in the weather on the outward wall,
Even in the force and road of casualty.(23)

A series of these images gives an atmosphere of fraudulence to the circumstances surrounding Macbeth before he carries out the murder of Duncan. Macbeth is under an illusion of the diabolic prophecies of the fiends.

It is important to our interpretation of Macbeth to notice that in Banquo's appraisal of Inverness quoted above he uses a number of words which imply buildings and that an image of a babe is suggested by the words, "Procreant cradle," and "breed." For they are among the images which, repeated often in the drama, play an important part in the revelation of the theme and in the characterization of the hero and heroine and therefore have a close relationship with its structure. An image of a house is first used in the Witch's words, combined with 'sleep'.

Sleep shall neither night nor day
Hang upon his penthouse lid. (I. iii. 19–20)

Then, in Duncan's speech which I quoted above when I explained that Macdonwald's treason bears a parallel to Macbeth's, the former was compared to a foundation of a building. The same image of a building qualifies this time Duncan himself; when he finds that Duncan was

murdered by someone, Macduff utters,

Most sacrilegious Murther hath broke ope  
The Lord's anointed Temple, and stole thence  
The life o'th'building!  

(II. iii. 68–70)

"Lord's anointed Temple" here bears a curious relation to the words of Banquo, "temple-haunting martlet." Further, Duncan's mortal

gash'd stabs look'd like a breach in nature  
For ruin's wasteful entrance.  

(II. iii. 113–14)

And Duncan asleep in his grave is compared again to a building when Lady Macbeth discloses her fears in her monologue.

'Tis safer to be that which we destroy  
Than by destruction dwell in doubtful joy.  

(III. ii. 6–7)

Here she utters her fears for the first time and to notice here that it is done in a monologue, not in a dialogue, is of great importance. For a monologue, in this case, has two-fold function: it shows us her inner revelation and at the same time, perhaps unconsciously, she pretends to be strong and fear for nothing in the presence of Macbeth. At any rate, the characters of Lady Macbeth and Macbeth change in opposite direction with the murder of Duncan as a turning point and the two lines of their characters will not cross each other any longer and the intervening space between them will become larger and larger as the drama progresses.

Here, in passing, I will follow an image from a beast briefly in advance of the plot, which seems to play no less important role in the characterization of the hero and the revelation of the theme of *Macbeth.* When Macbeth was hesitating to carry out the deed, Lady Macbeth encouraged him with an image of a cat in the adage, to which Macbeth
replies thus:

I dare do all that may become a man;
Who dares do more, is none. (I. vii. 46–47)

There is an image of a beast, which turns to be a clearer picture of a beast afterwards. If Macbeth lives in a boundary between a world of human beings and that of beasts, he will be an utter beast in the later period. Macbeth, bewildered by a mysterious ghost of Banquo in the fourth scene of the third act, murmurs that if so, a grave of a man must be "maws of kites," to which Lady Macbeth retorts; "What! quite unmann'd in folly?" Here is an image of a beast, and what is more, Macbeth tells the ghost of Banquo that he would not be afeared, if the ghost looks like a "Russian bear," "arm'd rhinoceros," or a "Hyrcan tiger," and when he disappears, he recovers to be a man. But in the *denouement* of the drama, Macbeth will have his last time in despair like a bear chained to a stake of a bear-baiting, which was a popular game among the Elizabethans.

They have tied me to a stake: I cannot fly,
But, bear-like, I must fight the course. (V. vii. 1–2)

Thus Macbeth turns to be a very strong man once he stepped in the crime, whereas Lady Macbeth comes to reveal her frailty and her own gentle disposition after that and at length, as will be seen later in the Sleep-Walking Scene, she will become unable to control herself.

In the meantime, she shows her husband what is an unshakable resolution, when she uses an image of a babe.

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

(I. vii. 54–59)

It is certainly true that to pluck one's nipples from one's own babe and "dash the brains out," is a cruel deed for a woman or any sex of human beings. Therefore, though he accuses her wife thus:

Bring forth men-children only!
For thy undaunted mettle should compose
Nothing but males,

(I. vii. 73–75)

Macbeth recovers his former strength to perform his resolution. But when she utters these words, she reveals unconsciously, as keen-eyed Coleridge observes, her own kind-heartedness. For truly evil women, like Goneril or Regan, need not say such a thing at all. In short, she fails to attain her self-realization, from which afterwards she will suffer. The same thing is true of Macbeth. This can be proved by following a succession of images from slumber. She says she can do to Duncan whatever she wants to do, when he is asleep and his chamberlains are made to sleep.

When Duncan is asleep
(Whereeto the rather shall his day's hard journey
Soundly invite him), his two chamberlains
Will I with wine and wassail so convince,
That memory, the warder of the brain,
Shall be a fume, and the receipt of reason
A limbeck only: when in swinish sleep
Their drenched natures lie, as in a death,
What cannot you and I perform upon
Th'unguarded Duncan?

(I. vii. 62–71)
Here we know she does not recognize the unexpected mysteriousness hidden in sleep, to which "day's hard journey" invites human beings. Besides, she regards, as is shown in the phrase, "as in a death," sleep in the same light with death. She shows tendency to identify sleep with death again when she says to Macbeth

The sleeping, and the dead,
Are but as pictures;  

Macbeth has the same tendency, and he wishes with a heart-splitting remorse, "Wake Duncan with thy knocking: I would thou couldst!" And, in order to wake Banquo in the morning when Duncan's death is discovered, he orders,

Shake off this downy sleep, death's counterfeit,
And look on death itself! 

Further, he utters remorseful words regrettfully.

Duncan is in his grave;
After fitful fever he sleeps well.

And, above all things else, he put to death sleep which is

the innocent sleep;
Sleep, that knits up the ravell'd sleave of care,
The death of each day's life, sore labour's bath,
Balm of hurt minds, great Nature's second course,
Chief nourisher in life's feast.

Lastly, Lady Macbeth's confidential talk with Macbeth,

Had he not resembled
My father as he slept, I had done't.
suggests a mysterious part of sleep and she does not know what will happen to her personality when she kills such sleep. We can go further in this image to say it is significant to notice that an image of sleep interrupted in the middle of it appears repeatedly in the drama. The first example is shown in the Witches’ words,

Sleep shall neither night nor day
Hang upon his penthouse lid. (I. iii. 19-20)

Banquo is also disturbed in his sleep by the “cursed thoughts” in the middle of the night when Duncan is to be murdered.

A heavy summons lies like lead upon me,
And yet I would not sleep: merciful Powers!
Restrain in me the cursed thoughts that nature
Gives way to in repose! (II. i. 6-9)

These “cursed thoughts” of Banquo are, as it is explained from his own mouth, “I dreamt last night of the three Weird Sisters,” points to the prophetic greetings of the Witches, and it is noticeable that he prays merciful Powers to “Restrain in me the cursed thoughts,” and in this respect he differs from Macbeth. Immediately afterwards Macbeth speaks to himself,

Now o’er the one half-world
Nature seems dead, and wicked dreams abuse
The curtain’d sleep. (II. i. 49-51)

Macbeth’s “wicked dreams” seem to contain the same things as Banquo’s “cursed thoughts,” but Macbeth, far from praying to God to stop them, walks, “With Tarquin’s ravishing strides, towards his design.” And in the last analysis, Macbeth who has killed sleeping

(25) ibid., II. i. 20.
Duncan suffers from insomnia in the following way.

Still it cried, "Sleep no more!" to all the house:
"Glamis hath murther'd Sleep, and therefore Cawdor
Shall sleep no more, Macbeth shall sleep no more!"

(II. ii. 40-42)

Or, if he sleeps, he is tortured in his nightmare. He has to

sleep

In the affliction of these terrible dreams,
That shake us nightly. (III. ii. 17-18)

Sleep is again by the Witches related to a venom this time. The first thing they throw into their cauldron with which they conjure up the spirits to answer Macbeth's questions is a toad.

Toad, that under cold stone
Days and nights has thirty-one
S welter'd venom, sleeping got,
Boil thou first, i'th'charmed pot. (IV. i. 6-9)

And on the part of Lady Macbeth, she is also afflicted in her sleep in the Sleep-Walking Scene of the last act. The Doctor says she shows "this slumbery agitation."

Thus Lady Macbeth cannot recognize the significance of the murder of sleep, i.e. of sleeping Duncan, nor the influence which it might bring to her. And after she has leapt over an important decisive step, she acknowledges the horribleness of her own deed, and then she destroys her own self-control, with the result that she accomplishes what may be called a kind of self-realization. It is in the image from buildings in her soliloquy that she confides her secret mind for the first time and it takes a picture of destroyed buildings, as it can be seen
in the previous examples. Macbeth extorts from the three Weird Sisters their answers to his questions thus:

   Though castles topple on their warders' heads;
   Though palaces, and pyramids, do slope
   Their heads to their foundations; though the treasure
   Of Nature's germens tumble all together,
   Even till destruction sicken, answer me
   To what I ask you.  

   (IV. i. 56-61)

The land which Tyrant Macbeth governs is also compared to a building and its foundation is shaken.

   Bleed, bleed, poor country!
   Great tyranny, lay thou thy basis sure.  

   (IV. iii. 31-32)

Thus the images of ruined or loose-based buildings seem to suggest an evil in Macbeth in the later part of the drama, a confirmation of which is given by the other images, a wasteful labour, and a banquet or food.

An image of a banquet appears in Duncan's words in which he praises Macbeth.

   And in his commendations I am fed;
   It is a banquet to me.  

   (I. iv. 55-56)

It is first used by the Witch in the introductory part:

   A sailor's wife had chestnuts in her lap,
   And mounch'd, and mounch'd, and mounch'd.  

   (I. iii. 4-5)

We can see the same one in the words of Lady Macbeth, "He has almost supp'd," while Duncan is lying asleep in his death-bed. It is also suggested where he says in the following way when he sees strange appearances of the Weird Sisters:
Or have we eaten on the insane root
That takes the reason prisoner? (I. iii. 84–85)

And the scene of the murder of Duncan is invested with these images. The two chamberlains are so drunken as to lose their reasons, and the Porter of the night is “carousing till the second cock,” and Macbeth who put to death, together with sleep, a “great Nature’s second course,/Chief nourisher of life’s feast,” is now unable to hold a banquet himself. The condition of the world after Duncan’s death is depicted by Macbeth thus:

The wine of life is drawn, and the mere lees
Is left this vault to brag of. (II. iii. 95–96)

And Macbeth himself must “eat [our] his meal in fear,” and first of all, as is clearly revealed in the so-called Banquet Scene, the banquet he holds results in a fiasco. That Macbeth cannot hold a fair banquet is suggested in Lady Macbeth’s following speech.

the feast is sold,
That is not often vouch’d, while ’tis a-making
’Tis given with welcome: to feed were best at home;
From thence, the sauce to meat is ceremony;
Meeting were bare without it. (III. iv. 32–36)

The same thing is hinted at in the fact that there is no seats where Macbeth is to sit: “The table’s full.” At the same time, we can see in this scene again the image from ruined buildings which suggests an evil in Macbeth.

Here had we now our country’s honour roof’d,
Were the grac’d person of our Banquo present; (III. iv. 39–40)
To be freed from "tyrant's feast" and to

Give to our tables meat, sleep to our nights,
Free from our feasts and banquets bloody knives

(III. vi. 34–35)

seem to the people to re-establish former order in Scotland. There is, in Malcolm who pretends to magnify evil deeds of Macbeth,

That vulture in you, to devour so many
As will to greatness dedicate themselves. (IV. iii. 74–75)

and further, when he says,

And my more-having would be as a sauce
To make me hunger more, (IV. iii. 81–82)

there is an image-clustre from food. This "avarice" may be inconsistent with the fact that Macbeth cannot hold a fair banquet, but what he feeds on is nothing but "horrors."

I have supp'd with horrors. (V. v. 13)

But Macbeth never realizes it until he discovers that the Witches are "juggling fiends,"

That palter with us in a double sense;
That' keep the word of promise to our ear,
And break it to our hope. (V. ix. 20–22)

And it is when he is made known that Macduff is not "one of woman born," that such enlightenment is given to him. Thus a Banquet image develops in conformity with the progress of the plot.

Macbeth, who believes in the Weird Sister's ambiguous prophecies about his destiny, says scornfully to Macduff, "Thou losest labour."

But these words, ironically enough, can be true of his own destiny. This
image from labour appears often throughout the play. The picture is
given in the fruitless battle against the treason of Macdonwald which
ironically bears a parallel to his own. It can be seen in the paradoxical
words of Macbeth,

The rest is labour, which is not us’d for you; (I. iv. 44)

and in the oximorone of Banquo,

this is a joyful trouble to you,
But yet 'tis one,

(II. iii. 49–50)
to which Macbeth replies in a paradoxical way,

The labour we delight in physics pain. (II. iii. 51)

In Macbeth’s soliloquy immediately after he has made up his mind
and ordered murderers to assassinate Banquo and his son, Fleance, he
discloses a tragic futility of his own efforts. There is an ironical figure
of a man who is drudging to get honours, losing his own precious
things, only to bring profits to other persons.

If 't be so,
For Banquo’s issue have I fil’d my mind;
For them the gracious Duncan have I murther’d;
Put rancour in the vessel of my peace
Only for them; and mine eternal jewel
Given to the common Enemy of man,
To make them kings, the seed of Banquo kings!

(III. i. 63–69)

And, lastly, the conjuration of the Witches which is repeated no less
than three times in the play is: “Double, double toil, and trouble.”
Thus the images of wasteful labour, repeatedly used in the play, gives
a kind of ironical tone to the movements of Macbeth and suggests that
he cannot realize reality in the world.

Here we must look into another important image, an image from plants, before we go to the most important images in the play. The image from plants used in the soliloquy above-quoted bears a close relation to the same image of Banquo when he asks the Witches about his own destiny:

If you can look into the seeds of time,
And say which grain will grow, and which will not.
(I. iii. 58–59)

And it was Duncan who sowed the seeds of the plant.

I have begun to plant thee, and will labour
To make thee full of growing.   (I. iv. 28–29)

And two speeches of Banquo follows:

There if I grow,
The harvest is your own.   (I. iv. 32–33)

and,

It should not stand in thy posterity;
But that myself should be the root and father
Of many kings.   (III. i. 4–5)

Thus the plant to which Banquo is compared is a plant that has a strong root and "full of growing," while Macbeth is compared to a plant which is evanescent, or a plant which is overripe and has venomous toxic. It is a "fruitless crown" and a "barren sceptre" that he has got. Malcolm, who pretends to be Tyrant Macbeth has,

All the particulars of vice so grafted,
That, when they shall be open'd, black Macbeth
Will seem as pure as snow;   (IV. iii. 50–53)
Sticks deeper, grows with more pernicious root
Than summer-seeming lust.  

When he is overripe and venomous, it seems to Macduff that

Macbeth
Is ripe for shaking.  

Then, Macbeth realizes vainfulness of usurping the throne to live in fear, and soliloquizes, using the image from a plant again.

My way of life
Is fall'n into the sere, the yellow leaf.  

Lastly, when he has cut down such a venomous tyrant, what Malcolm will have to do is

What's more to do
Which would be planted newly with the time.  

Next I will analyse again the images of clothes and a babe that are the most important to the interpretation of the theme of this drama. How this image works in the first act, we have seen before, and the same quality of unlawfulness can be seen in the image of the Porter.

Faith, here's an English tailor
come hither for stealing out of a French hose.  

Macbeth describes lying Duncan with an awkward image from clothes.

Here lay Duncan,
His silver skin lac'd with his golden blood.  

"Borrow'd Robes" and "Naked Frailties": An Essay on the Theme, and Dramatic Structure in 'Macbeth' Viewed Mainly through Imagery (Kimira) (61)
When Duncan was found to be murdered, Macbeth uses the images to pronounce his resolution to fight against the villainous crime.

Let's briefly put on manly readiness,
And meet i'th' hall together.  

(II. iii. 133-34)

These words apparently mean simply that we shall meet in the hall when we have got our clothes suitable for men. But when we read them in relation with the symbolic expression of Banquo in which he reveals a like resolution,

When we have our naked frailties hid,
That suffer in exposure, let us meet,
And question this most bloody piece of work,
To know it further.  

(II. iii. 126-29)

they prove to have symbolic meanings. Banquo’s words mean the same thing as Macbeth’s. But they are quite different in their images. Banquo knows the frailties of a man when he is naked, but Macbeth cannot realise these “naked frailties” in man and it seems to him that to have clothes on is nothing but to “put on manly readiness.” He is deluded by the illusion of the clothes which only wrap up the surface of a man and he thinks that he can bury his evil self in the clothes. Therefore, the images from clothes adapted to describe him wear more qualities of sickliness and unlawfulness as the drama progresses towards his end.

The images in the scene where he orders assassination of Banquo and his son,

Who wear our health but sickly in his life,
Which in his death were perfect,  

(III. i. 106-108)

and the image in the words in which Macduff utters curses against
the land Tyrant Macbeth governs, "wear thou thy wrongs,"(26) and in Malcolm's suspicious words towards Macduff,

Though all things foul would wear the brows of grace,  
Yet Grace must still look so,                     (IV. iii. 23-24)

are all drawing an ironical figure of Macbeth who is not yet aware of these differences between appearance and reality. There is a symbolic meaning in the words of Rosse,

Your eye in Scotland  
Would create soldiers, make our women fight,  
To doff their dire distresses.                 (IV. iii. 186-88)

For it means that if Malcolm comes to Scotland who should bring former peace to Scotland, there will appear soldiers and even women will fight, in order to put off the clothes of "dire distresses" and it is Macbeth himself that made such clothes in Scotland. His "borrow'd robes" now became too large for him and he cannot "buckle his distemper'd cause."(27) And, furthermore,

now does he feel his title  
Hang loose about him, like a giant's robe  
Upon a dwarfish thief.                        (V. ii. 20-22)

Then he realizes the robe of a title, King of Scotland, does not suit him. It was first suspected by Macduff, when he says,

Lest our robe sit easier than our new!       (II. iv. 38)

which are spoken after Macbeth has "gone to Scone to be invested." For "our new" robe means here homage to new King, Macbeth.

(26) ibid., IV. iii. 33.  
(27) ibid., V. ii. 15-16.
In the meantime, an image from a babe is also an important image which appears repeatedly in the play. We can say that the true cause of illusion of Macbeth, and therefore the cause of his ruin are suggested through this image together with the previous image from clothes. It also symbolizes a re-birth of the order in Scotland, because it is combined with Macduff, an antagonist of Macbeth, who helps Malcolm Prince of Cumberland, to re-establish former order to Scotland. Therefore, the image has a threatening effect upon the hero. We see the first example of the image in his own soliloquy in which he discloses the fear in his mind accompanying the murder of Duncan.

And Pity, like a naked new-born babe,
Striding the blast, or heaven's Cherubins, hors'd
Upon the sightless couriers of the air,
Shall blow the horrid deed in every eye,
That tears shall drown the wind. (I. vii. 21–25)

Here he is afraid that Pity, provoked by the murder of Duncan, who "Hath borne his faculties so meek, hath been/So clear in his great office," might reveal his "horrid deed" to the world, analogising it to a babe, especially to its crying voice. There are two aspects a baby has in the image; a baby as a weak being and a baby as what must be protected because of its weakness. The weaker it is, the stronger pity its cry provoke. Macbeth is aware of these aspects at this moment, so he wants to "proceed no further" in his horrible enterprise. But he is persuaded by Lady Macbeth, as we saw in the convincing story spoken with an image of a baby, and in her speech there the emphasis is laid upon weakness of a baby, and when she says, "'tis the eye of child/That fears a painted devil," it implies that a baby lacks braveness. The same thing is hinted at in his self-portrait, "the baby of a girl."
That "finger of birth-strangled babe" which the Witches throw into their cauldron is a pitiful thing as well as evil because it was not christened.

What threatens Macbeth most of all are apparitions which the Weird Sisters show to him. The Second Apparition is "a bloody child" and the Third "a child crowned with a tree in his hand. In the latter figure there is an image of a child who shall succeed to the crown, and at the same time, "a tree in his hand" combines it with a plant image we have seen before. This combination of an image of a baby and that of a plant organizes a structure of equivocation in the Weird Sister's prophecies. There are two things told in them that encourages Macbeth and on which he relies. One of them is given by the Second Apparition above-mentioned:

Be bloody, bold, and resolute: laugh to scorn
The power of man, for none of woman born
Shall harm Macbeth. (IV. i. 79-81)

The other by the Third Apparition:

Be lion-mettled, proud, and take no care
Who chafes, who frets, or where conspirers are;
Macbeth shall never vanquish'd be, until
Great Birnam wood to high Dunsinane hill
Shall come against him. (IV. i. 90-94)

The former prophecy has a bearing upon a baby image because it involves an image of birth, which confirms that a baby image symbolizes a re-birth of order in Scotland, and the latter upon a plant image, as is proved by the "Birnam wood."

Macduff, who, defeating Tyrant Macbeth, helps Malcolm to re-establish order in Scotland, which has been disturbed by Macbeth, embodies
one of the two truths implied in the Witches' equivocation, the false side of which Macbeth believes to be true and relies upon, in the fact that he is not "one of woman born," but

Macduff was from his mother's womb
Untimely ripp'd. (V. vii. 15-16)

Malcolm another truth by ordering his soldiers thus:

Let every soldier hew him down a bough [of the wood of Birnam]
And bear't before him: thereby shall we shadow
The numbers of our host and make discovery
Err in report of us. (V. iv. 4-7)

This equivocation was hinted at in the beginning of the play, and has been confirmed since in the outset of the third scene of the second act the Porter made his speech pretending to be a Porter of Hell-Gate.
The second imaginary visitor was an equivocator.

Faith, here's an equivocator, that could swear in both scales against either scale; who committed treason enough for God's sake, yet could not equivocate to heaven. (II. iii. 9-12)

And his paradoxical way of speaking in the face of Macduff reflects the atmosphere of the Witches in the first act and makes their equivocation more concrete one.

Lechery, Sir, it provokes, and unprovokes: it provokes the desire, but it takes away the performance. Therefore, much drink may be said to be an equivocator with lechery: it makes him, and it mars him; it sets him on, and it takes him off; it persuades him, and disheartens him; makes him
stand to, and not stand to: in conclusion equivocate him in a sleep, and, giving him the lie, leaves him. (II. iii. 29-37)

Deluded by such an equivocation, Macbeth cannot recognize reality latent in appearance of human affairs, "naked frailties/That suffer in exposure," and wearing the "borrow'd robes", pretends to put on "manly readiness" in which he thinks he can bury his evil self.

In the introductory part of the drama, the Witches and their words suggesting paradoxical contradiction brews up the atmosphere that man's value judgment is impossible or at least ambiguous and erroneous, to which the hero unconsciously shows a striking affinity, in contrast with the dispassionate attitude of Banquo who observes the phenomenon with a cool objectivity. Such equivocation is confirmed through the mouth of the Porter in the next stage of the drama, i.e. in the part of discovery. That was suggested after Macbeth murdered Duncan, after the fortune's wheel began to move towards his ruin. In the next stage, an ironical picture of Macbeth drudging sedulously to perform his ambition to the last is given through those images taken from wasteful labour, an overripe plant, and a banquet. in failure. And ultimately, Macbeth, when his "horrid deed" is revealed by Pity which he compared to a "naked new-born babe" which in turn suggests "naked frailties" in a man, attains his own self-realization and reaches the resignation, which is shown through the images of overmature plant, "the sere, the yellow leaf," and ruins himself when the truths about the Witches's equivocation were embodied in the fact that Macduff was not "one of woman born" and that Birnam wood moves towards his castle.

Thus images combines dialogues, characters, and scenes with each
other, plays an important part in the revelation of the theme of the play. Various kinds of threads, 'a banquet', 'a building', 'a book'. 'clothes', 'a plant', 'a baby', 'sleep', etc., are interwoven into a sheet of golden embroidery of Macbeth.