

PRIMITIVISM AND THE ANIMAL IN SHAKESPEARE'S *MACBETH*

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iii
INTRODUCTION: WHY <i>PRIMITIVISM</i> ?.....	iv
CHAPTER ONE: SILENCING THE UNCANNY: PRIMITIVE ENCOUNTERS WITH <i>MACBETH</i> 'S WEIRD SISTERS.....	1
CHAPTER TWO: UNDERSTANDING THE PRIMITIVE: ENGAGING THE ANIMAL IN SHAKESPEARE'S <i>MACBETH</i>	24
CONCLUSION: DRAMATIZING THE GAZE IN <i>THE OKAVANGO MACBETH</i>	46
REFERENCES.....	52
CURRICULUM VITAE.....	55

ABSTRACT

The recent turn toward environmental studies in humanities scholarship, has contributed to an influx of Shakespearean scholarship that centers on the “natural.” *Macbeth* has long been identified as Shakespeare’s most ‘natural’ play. The text is riddled with references to weather, animals, and nature which have made it a popular text to explore from an ecocritical perspective. While a good deal of scholarly work has considered notions of the uncanny and the animal in *Macbeth*, few scholars have connected these ideas with notions of the primitive, a concept worth exploring as a connection to a ‘natural,’ or undeveloped, sentiment that resonates with the emergence of a green Shakespeare. *Macbeth* offers a primitivism in which the primitive figure confronts the early modern subject as opposed to being summoned from a retrospective sentimentality. To illuminate this reading, I look primarily at encounters with figures embodying the primitive sensibilities the early modern subject would have been expected to have surmounted, namely, the ability to reason and act in accordance with morality rather than instinct.

INTRODUCTION

WHY PRIMITIVISM?

The recent turn toward environmental studies in humanities scholarship, has contributed to an influx of Shakespearean scholarship that centers on the “natural”. *Macbeth* has long been identified as Shakespeare’s most ‘natural’ play.ⁱ The text is riddled with references to weather, animals, and nature which have made it a popular text to explore from an ecocritical perspective.ⁱⁱ While a good deal of scholarly work has considered notions of the uncanny and the animal in *Macbeth*, few scholars have connected these ideas with notions of the primitive, a concept worth exploring as a connection to a ‘natural,’ or undeveloped, sentiment that resonates with the emergence of a green Shakespeare.ⁱⁱⁱ Stephen Greenblatt’s seminal work on New Historicism and Shakespeare, *Shakespeare Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England* (1988), addresses his desire to ‘speak with the dead’ through the ‘textual traces’ left behind. Erica Fudge propels this desire into the realm of animal studies, a feat even more complicated than Greenblatt’s since, as Fudge points out, “They [the animals] had no voice and left no textual traces” (2). Reading animals is only possible through a layering of human language, and, as a result, our conception of these silent figures is shaped in the human image. What this speaking for—as opposed to with—animals implies, however, is a stripped agency in the primitive figure which, I find, is not consistent with the fashioning of primitive figures in *Macbeth*.

What I attempt in this project is to identify how primitivism as a concept developed in an early modern sensibility informs our environmental—particularly our inter-species—interactions today. The nucleus of this project formed as a result of a production of *Macbeth* that literalizes the relationship between the primitive figure and the human. In 2009, Alexander McCall Smith wrote and produced an anthropomorphic opera entitled, *The Okavango Macbeth*.^{iv} In this opera, the characters of *Macbeth* form a troupe of exiled baboons in Botswana’s Okavango River Delta. Inspired by the research of Dorothy Cheney and Robert Seyfarth in their book, *Baboon Metaphysics* (2010)—which describes the matrilineal social structures of the Chacma baboons in the Moremi Game Reserve in the Okavango Delta—McCall Smith found Lady Macbeth’s tenacious and manipulative behavior well represented by Okavango’s dominant female baboon and thought the baboons’ social practices of conferring power and social status from one generation to another would facilitate an organic telling of *Macbeth* within an African landscape. The baboons in the opera are being observed and studied by a group of three primatologists, creating a landscape primed for interesting interspecies dynamics. While McCall Smith found Shakespeare’s early modern figure, Lady Macbeth, written into Botswana’s ecological system today, I find the dynamic established between the primatologists and baboons suggestive of a parallel between early modern and postmodern conceptions of the primitive. If the characters in *Macbeth* can be so naturally grafted upon this naturalized setting in which they take on the role of the primitive figure in such a literal way, it seemed to me that there might be something inherently primitive within the early modern text informing this seemingly unlikely and ambitious interpretation. That the interaction is simultaneously characterized by an encounter with

the uncanny and the animal, made locating encounters with such figures in *Macbeth* an appropriate place to start.

While I agree with Fudge's claim that "our linguistic representations limit us to an understanding which creates the world in our own image," I contest her claim that animals have no voice. While they lack language, they certainly do not lack vocalization, or utterances that indicate the potential for meaning making. What this suggests, I believe, is that while we might not share clarity of expression, interspecies interactions formulate a space in which to imagine other ways of hearing and understanding one another.

Consider Lennox's descriptions of the night's occurrences in Act Two:

Lennox

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 confus'd events,
New hatch'd to th'woeful time, the obscure bird
Clamour'd the livelong night: some say, the earth
Was feverous, and did shake. (*Mac* II.iii.53-60)^v

He indicates a link between environmental circumstances and human events. However, the question stands as to whether this relationship is one of reflection, causality, or mere coincidence. Focusing on his description of the bird's language can shed light on this construction between humans and nature. Though the accents heard were "terrible," a description suggesting something unfamiliar or out of place, the clamoring is readable as

both lamentation and prophecy. Within this moment where the unfamiliar interacts with the human there is space for negotiating interpretations. By anthropomorphizing, or attributing and projecting human qualities onto the non-human, the bird's vocalizations are understood to resonate with the human state of affairs, Lennox gestures to a language beyond lexicon, grammar, and syntax. More than a coincidence, Lennox deems the natural world capable of engaging vocally, if not linguistically, with humans. I find that this engagement makes these interactions more than either reflective or consequential—the human events do not supersede those of the animals. Instead the moment of anthropomorphizing calls attention to anthropocentrism—or the favoring of humans over nonhuman animals—and signals a turn away from the human to reveal the animal's own agency in the encounter.

Vita Fortunati suggests that, “primitivism has a cyclical appearance in Western history, as long as the reappropriation of the primitive constitutes a retroactive projection generated by the socio-cultural crisis of an ‘epoch’” (qtd. in White 17). What Fortunati's statement suggests is an ever-recurring image of primitivism that is always recalled from an idealized past. Fortunati spatially configures primitivism behind the modern figure; there must be a turning around, or turning back to reach the primitive. While Fortunati claims that primitivism makes cyclical appearances, with primitivism always fitting in retrospectively, in *Macbeth* one finds a proactive situating of primitivism depicted through a future-oriented view of the primitive subject. This temporal situating is enhanced by spatial situating to reveal how the primitive subject is a figure *with* which to engage rather than *from* which to develop or progress.

DEFINING PRIMITIVISM

Primitivism is a concept that has greatly evolved through the centuries. *Primitive* first appeared in the early fifteenth century to mean "original or ancestor, not developed or derived from anything" in reference to animals. However, as early as 415 B.C. we find the human developmentally stratified from animals in literature in a move which renders them primitive, or undeveloped, in the process. Aeschylus' account of Prometheus in *Prometheus Bound* depicts humanity's acquisition of fire as a driving force away from the primitive. Prometheus claims:

Beasts of the forest and the field I broke
To harness, made them servants to the yoke
And carriers who might lift from man the pain
Of extreme toil; I hanelled to the rein
The gentle steed, and in the chariot tied
For rich men who would glory in their pride.
I made, none else, for mariners the free
And flaxen-winged chariots of the sea.

(Aeschylus 31)

Prometheus's gift catapults humans out of the animal league. Non-human animals are now the subjects of humans. In early modern literature and writings, this dynamic turns from an interspecies concern to a way to 'otherize' colonized peoples as primitive tropes are used to justify imperialist ventures (Fudge 31). Shankar Raman offers a similar depiction of the primitive in his discussion of early modern representations of cannibalism, a feature of the primitive which I take up in Chapter Two. He writes that

“eating the flesh of one’s fellow human beings marked a fall from humanity, expressing a fundamental cognitive and social failure to maintain the distinctions upon which civilization itself was seen to depend” (Raman 26). Through the eighteenth century the terms dominant usages occurred in reference to essentialism and fundamentalism in liturgical settings to refer to the body of the church with *primitive* or essentialist beliefs, and to God as *primitive*, or basic, in relation to the human both fundamentally and developmentally.

According to the *OED*, primitive gained the derogatory meaning which we now understand to signify an uncivilized, unintelligent, or uncouth person as late as 1967. Imbued with this aspect, ideas of primitivism and the primitive have made their way into political and literary discourses. Alan Richardson and Omaar Hena outline two notions of primitivism as the term has entered postcolonial discourse. “The first refers to the idealization of another culture whether described as ancient, savage, non-rational, or wholly ‘other’ that reflects back upon a writer’s attitudes towards his own historical moment. The second form of primitivism introduces the ‘presence of nostalgia or desire for lost origins perceived as foundational for, or preferable to, the idealizing culture.’”^{vi} Likewise, Mariana Torgovnick positions primitivism as a necessary precondition for Western conceptions of the self. She suggests that

Western desires for the primitive have not waned as primitive societies have modified or been forced to modify traditional ways of life...those desires have become more and more unambiguously tinged with nostalgia as primitive societies ceased to present obstacles to the spread of Western values. (246)

While these scholars, like Fortunati, consider the retroactive fashioning of Primitivism, I respond with a reading of the primitive as proactive. Rather than functioning as a precondition away from which the early modern defines and delineates itself, I believe *Macbeth* offers a primitivism in which the primitive figure confronts the early modern subject as opposed to being summoned from a retrospective sentimentality. To illuminate this reading, I look primarily at encounters with figures embodying the primitive sensibilities the early modern subject would have been expected to have surmounted, namely, the ability to reason and act in accordance with morality rather than instinct.

DEFINING AND ENGAGING THE PRIMITIVE

The primitive figures explored here are largely characterized by the non-human. The encounters between the human and the uncanny explored in Chapter One, and the human and the animal in Chapter Two both constitute interspecies interactions, by which I mean an encounter between a human and nonhuman entity. I analyze the dialogue during the moments of these encounters to reveal places in which language fails to uphold the reasoning ability that the human capacity for language implies. These slippages, suggest, I believe, the presence of the primitive within the human subject. I consider what these encounters in *Macbeth* suggest regarding the site of anthropomorphizing. Apart from the artistic rendering of this dynamic as I find it constructed in McCall Smith's opera, these encounters greatly inform the practical application of discussing and researching animals in species studies today. How does the researcher's voice, in speaking about the non-human subject, actually speak for it, and

what does such a tendency reveal about our own perception of the human relationship to primitive figures? Ultimately, I hope to illuminate ways in which anthropocentrism—which "means in its crude expression that human interests, needs, and desires are all that matter, and that if any life form can be said to possess intrinsic value, only *Homo sapiens* can"—is both formed and subverted in the moment of anthropomorphizing (Clarke 66).

In Chapter One I consider the Weird Sisters as primitive figures which the humans in *Macbeth* encounter. By functioning as uncanny figures, I suggest how the Sisters constitute a sense of unsettling foreign familiarity that resonates with species studies involving primates today. Through their use of equivocating, noncommittal, and convoluted language, even when speaking, the Weird Sisters are largely figures of silence open to interpretation. Moreover, as they are situated on the margins in society in their withered and wild attire (I.iii.40), and in humanity as the Earth's bubbles (I.iii.79), they are, as Lennox's birds, subject to anthropomorphizing. By considering the agency they possess and convey in spite of this relationship, I suggest that *Macbeth* offers a future-oriented primitivism which unsettles the notion of the primitive as something against which someone can construct a concept of self. As Macbeth fails to move beyond the primitive by virtue of its being always already ahead of him, we find the primitive figure legitimized in the present. The ways in which this dynamic similarly plays itself out in the arena of species studies today makes this early modern conception an interesting place to reveal insight into ways of listening to and hearing the primitive.

In Chapter 2, I transition from considering ways of understanding the primitive, a concept which, in this project, relies heavily on reading and reacting to the exchanging of

gaze in interspecies encounters. I look to encounters in *Macbeth* that involve interactions between human and non-human animals—in particular, horses and birds—to reveal the breakdown in language that accompanies moments of anthropomorphizing. What these breakdowns in either effectiveness or reason in the language achieves is, I believe, a gesturing to the primitive sensibility within the modern, developed, human. If the primitive instinct has, indeed, been surmounted as the human capacity for reason, language, and empathy suggest, then the primitive fails to appeal to a nostalgic sentimentality such as Richardson and Hena describe and, instead, functions with engaging and active agency. Reorienting the ‘primitive’ figures as figures occupying this role of agency, *Macbeth* champions an interspecies engagement that requires mutual respect between the engaging parties. This ideal favors biocentrism, a term which functions as an antonym to anthropocentrism and refers to the view that all organisms, including humans, are part of a larger biotic web or network or community whose interests must constrain, direct, or govern the human interest.

CHAPTER ONE

SILENCING THE UNCANNY: PRIMITIVE ENCOUNTERS WITH *MACBETH'S WEIRD SISTERS*

You seem to understand me,
By each at once her choppy finger laying
Upon her skinny lips...

-Banquo (*Mac* I.iii.43-45)

Banquo narrates the first encounter with the Weird Sisters, taking their hand gesture as a sign of understanding. While the gesture is ambiguous, the Sisters' nonverbal motions emphasize the encounter's silence. A.C. Bradley and Dover Wilson suggest that, while they respond to Macbeth directly, the gesture signals the Sisters' reluctance to speak to Banquo (Muir 15). However, rather than a closing off or shutting down of communication, their prompting for silence in conjunction with their impending approach imbues this gesture with a deferral that indicates revelation suspended beyond the limitations of language.

This initial silence is unsettling for both Macbeth and Banquo, but in quite distinct ways. In this first encounter, the Weird Sisters simultaneously elicit fear and familiarity in Macbeth to create an uncanny effect. This uncanny effect is produced, I believe, as a result of the Weird Sisters' embodying and presenting a primitivism in which Macbeth

confronts the primitive instincts he believes surmounted, namely the cognitive ability to act in accordance with reason as opposed to instinct. This confrontation contradicts the early modern conception of primitivism which anchored the primitive in the past as a figure which one should recognize as undeveloped and base, or indicative of a way of life which civilized humans should have overcome.^{vii} This strategic placement of the primitive as spatially behind and temporally past provided useful rhetorical leverage for imperial pursuits, a parallel which links the primitive figure and the colonized subject.^{viii}

Discourses of dispossession of the self, haunting familiarity, and doubling riddle postcolonial literary analysis which helps to clarify the temporal rendering of the uncanny primitive figures in *Macbeth* explored here. For instance, Erica Johnson considers how V.S. Naipaul's "rearrangement of temporality through space" in *A Bend in the River*, "leads to a metaphysics of postcoloniality whereby the terms 'post' and 'colonial' enter into a mutually haunting, as opposed to sequential, relationship, illustrating Dipesh Chakrabarty's argument that in ex-colonial locales, 'historical time is not integral ... it is out of joint with itself'" (Johnson 16). What Johnson notices of time in Naipaul's novel is, I believe, already imagined in the Weird Sisters embodiment of the primitive in *Macbeth*. They are figures privy to future knowledge—somehow always already 'post'—yet aligned with a primitivism that marks them as the uncivilized other. They have "more in them than mortal knowledge," but their language fails to impart reason—"lesser than Macbeth and greater. / not so happy, yet much happier"—and their linguistic attempts often degenerate into a nonverbal barrage of images: "Show! Show! Show!" (*Mac* I.iii.65-66 & IV.i.106-108). The Sisters' equivocation has been explored elsewhere as a doubling of Duncan. In her discussion of Macbeth's and Duncan's mutual

dependence and contested succession both within the play and historically, Olga Valbuena finds Duncan—whose succession is, according to Valbuena, established through ceremony and equivocation—doubled by the Weird Sisters. Reading their first encounter with the men on the heath, Valbuena surmises that the Sisters’ “enigmatic gestures [tempt] Macbeth and Banquo to partake (as if for the first time) of the fatal secret,” a signal which silently acknowledges Macbeth’s tenuous, or expected, claims to the throne (89).^{ix} In addition to this doubling of Duncan within the play, however, I find that their silent gesture signals a doubling of Macbeth that recalls a pre-linguistic primitivism which, as I argue here, also anticipates a post-linguistic posthumanism.

Macbeth, having secured his position as monarch—the position of possession—simultaneously struggles with the threat of dispossession. This preoccupation appears quite clearly in his second encounter with the Weird Sisters as Macbeth adopts the uncanny primitive nature the Sisters represent. Freud’s uncanny, *unheimlich*, literally meaning, “unhomely,” informs our exploration of the term here. Upon learning that “none of woman born / shall harm Macbeth,” he opts to “make assurance *double* sure,” rather than take the Sister’s apparition at its word and risk losing his position as “high-plac’d Macbeth” (*Mac* IV.i.80, 83 *italics mine*, 98). The poignant ‘double’ in his statement reveals the persisting threat of dispossession in spite of the apparitions’ comforting words.

As he encounters the Weird Sisters—his primitive double—Macbeth is able to cling to his claim of possession no matter how unreasonable his doing so becomes. Pramod Nayar’s postcolonial critique of Amitav Ghosh’s novel, *The Hungry Tide*,

demonstrates how Ghosh similarly employs the uncanny to foreground this terror of dispossession. Naray writes that “the uncanny is the name of this experience of double perception of any space which is at once familiar and strange, safe and threatening, “mine” and “not mine,”” but, like Freud, argues that the uncanny is more than a perceptual condition (Nayar 89). Instead, he argues that the uncanny “is a political context where refugees are made into ghosts in ‘unhomely’ locations of dispossession” (95). Macbeth’s aversion to reason in this moment with the Weird Sisters reveals his primitive sensibilities and illustrates a moment in which the primordial pervades the present as Macbeth faces his instinctual reaction to the potential threat of dispossession occupying his own ‘unhomely’ nature. Through his encounter with the uncanny primitive, Macbeth accesses his own primitivism, and, in doing so, reorients the primitive as anything but past. The temporal inconsistency that characterizes the Weird Sister’s naming within the play also speaks to this sense of possession and dispossession.

The figures are self-proclaimed “Weird Sisters,” described by Macbeth to have “strange intelligence” (*Mac* 1.3.32 & 70). The OED offers “partaking of a supernatural character; mysterious, weird, uncomfortably strange or unfamiliar” as one definition of ‘uncanny,’ making the very words used to describe the figures allude to their uncanny nature. The Sisters coin themselves “Weird” in Act One, Scene Three, before Macbeth and Banquo have even entered the scene (*Mac* I.iii.32). However, it would seem that their use of ‘weird’ refers not to their relation to one another—for certainly they appear familiar and comfortable with one another. Instead, they are weird as a result of their relationship to others, in this case, Macbeth. Introducing a temporal inconsistency, Macbeth calls them by this same name in his letter to Lady Macbeth, which she reads at

the beginning of Act One, Scene Five: “these Weird Sisters saluted me, and referr’d me to the coming on of time, with “Hail, King that shalt be”” (*Mac* 1.5.9-10). In this way, Macbeth’s out of joint designation of the figures as “Weird Sisters” proximally displaces them.

The term ‘Cousin’ is employed throughout the text to refer to a variety of kinship relationships in male / male encounters as well as male / female encounters. In Act 4, Scene 2, Rosse refers to Lady Macduff as both “dearest Coz” and “pretty cousin” (IV.ii.14 & 25). ‘Sister,’ on the other hand, appears to be a term reserved in Shakespeare’s canon to reflect legitimate siblinghood.^x So why, having not heard their self-declaration of the term, and given their ambiguous appearance—both in terms of mere personhood, but also gender—does Macbeth designate these figures with the paradoxical linking of ‘weird,’ (a term which effectually otherizes them) with ‘sisters,’ (a term seemingly reserved for legitimate familial relations)? It would seem that, recognizing something both so strange and so familiar in their being, he names them ‘Weird Sisters’ in relation to himself. The closeness that this naming reflects positions the uncanny as a feature of the primitive by calling attention to this striking similarity but distinction in kind. This doubling creates a dual relationship in which the primitive serves as both a reflection of the self and an object against which to define the self.

Much in the way Duncan’s “double trust” in Macbeth as his kinsman, subject, and host is upset by Macbeth’s perversion of the *heimlich* to the *unheimlich* (the homely to the unhomely) during Duncan’s visit to Dunsinane, Macbeth’s double assurance here conveys Macbeth’s attempt to occupy full possession of the kingdom by rejecting reason

and reverting to primitive instincts (I.vii.12). In this way, Macbeth's confrontation with his primitive double, the Weird Sisters, anticipates his encounter with his own primitive double: a seemingly surmounted spirit conjured by the threat of dispossession which fails to reason and acts on baser instincts of self-preservation at any cost.

Heimlich generally means "belonging to the house or the family," (2).

Unheimlich, turns this notion on its head, but, as Freud notes, not without remaining linked to the root. As the lexicon suggests, the two words do not oppose one another, but *unheimlich* actually stems from—or is an outgrowth of—the root, *heimlich*. Just as the posthuman relies on the human, the uncanny relies on the canny; the appearance of the posthuman or the uncanny reinforces the human and the canny, respectively, so that the outgrowth does not overcome the existence of the root, but keeps it always already reincorporated. The word *Heimlich* itself reinforces the link between the uncanny and the primitive by calling to mind Banquo's reference to 'hemlock.' Like the Weird Sister's nonverbal gesture, the word 'hemlock' is silent in the text itself, but resonant in Banquo's reference to "the insane root, that takes the reason prisoner" (I.iii.85). When faced with the uncanny (*unheimlich*), the sensibilities lose sight of reason (hemlock). The uncanny, then, is intimately related to the primitive in that it combines the known with the knowable in spatially and temporally unsettling ways. By fashioning the primitive figure as pushing against a spatially behind and temporally former situation, *Macbeth* imagines a primitivism in which the silenced figure does not necessarily indicate a figure that has been overcome but one which gestures to a space beyond language to indicate and address the limits of linguistic classification.

Although Banquo is crucial in narrating and defining the Weird Sisters as primitive figures, Macbeth alone perceives the initial encounter as one involving the uncanny. By expanding my epigraph, one finds Banquo's recognition of the potential for an uncanny encounter even though he is not struck as is Macbeth.

What are these,
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? 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. (*Mac* I.iii.39-46)

Freud writes in his 1919 essay, "The Uncanny," that, "the better oriented in his environment a person is, the less readily will he get the impression of something uncanny in regard to the objects and events in it" (Freud 2). Mary Floyd-Wilson speaks to Macbeth's orientation within his environment on the basis of Timothy J. Reiss's notion of 'passibility' which, "in its Renaissance usage...means the vulnerability inherent in being human" (Floyd-Wilson 134).^{xi} Floyd-Wilson contends that Dunsinane's remote geographical situation among Scotland's highlands makes Macbeth particularly susceptible to the elements of his environment (134). As a result, the Sisters—being primarily elemental themselves as they "hover through the fog and filthy air" and float as the earth's "bubbles"—pose a greater likelihood of impacting Macbeth in a significant way (*Mac* I.i.12 & I.iii.79). Banquo, however, seems oriented well enough within his environment to stave off the Weird Sisters' attempts to permeate his perception. He refutes the presence of fear while describing Macbeth as "rapt withal" (I.iii.56). Banquo

notes that the figures' beards forbid him to interpret them as women; nor do the beards provide a significant enough indication of manhood to classify these sisters as men.

Being not quite male or female, and approaching in silence, the Weird Sisters occupy a space of potentiality in which they have a narrative written upon them. Banquo's voice formulates and guides the way the Weird Sisters are apprehended as uncanny without implicating Banquo in the uncanny encounter. Instead he marvels at Macbeth's stunned appearance asking, "why do you start, and seem to fear / Things that do sound so fair?" (I.iii.51-52). Banquo's description of these figures as 'not like th'inhabitants o'th'earth,' challenges their status as humans before he suddenly acknowledges their being same in kind if not identifiable in gender; he notes, 'you *should* be women'. His initial confusion becomes clouded by the Sisters' prophecies as he trades his query regarding their personhood for an appeal that they "speak then to him" (I.iii.60). His interest in determining *what they are* is replaced with a need to know *what they mean*; deciphering their personhood is inferior to deciphering their message. This strange supersession of word to speaker accommodates two interpretations; it devalues the human as a conveyor of messages and privileges the primitive as a valuable source of knowledge. If establishing personhood is not an a priori condition to receiving—with any credibility—the Sisters' prophecies, the result situates the primitive being as future-oriented by virtue of the weight Banquo and Macbeth grant their prophetic words despite their—the Sisters'—indecipherable condition of being.

Examining the role of language in these encounters with the uncanny primitive in *Macbeth* offers a way of understanding the link between language and thought in non-

human animals. Cary Wolfe notes in *What is Posthumanism* that "...the textually oriented humanities have much to teach cognitive sciences about what language is (and isn't) and how that, in turn, bears on any possible philosophy of the subject (human or animal)" (Wolfe 47). Exploring the way in which *Macbeth* has already written the script for a posthuman encounter with the primitive requires drawing comparisons between the "native other" (the Weird Sisters) and nonhuman animals (primates). While this may seem a generous analogy, much has been said elsewhere regarding their similarities (Fudge 12). Homi Bhabha^{xii}, Marjorie Spiegel^{xiii}, and Erica Fudge^{xiv} have each taken up the doubling of the animal and the native other. Similarly, Neel Ahuja traces the representation of primates in colonial rhetoric, explaining that "as the idea of civilization encompassed a savage heart of darkness, primates came to stand in for a 'primitive consciousness' underlying social relations" (560). As primates have become posthumanism's Weird Sisters—at once a familiar cousin and a foreign species—the relationship between the primitive and the uncanny has become grafted upon species studies and posthumanist theory.

Banquo calls attention to the Weird Sisters savage and bearded appearance, and, in doing so, narrates figures which evade the parameters of personhood by virtue of their wild or uncivilized ambiguities. The Sisters' beards—an excess of hair—also suggest a primitivism not only in the uncivilized sense of the term, but from an evolutionary standpoint as well which grounds my discussion of the uncanny primitive in *Macbeth* with species studies involving primates today.

Although *Macbeth* predates both Lamarck's theory of transmutation and Darwin's theory of evolution, Erica Fudge's analysis of Alessandro Magno's 1562 visit to the Bear Garden in London bridges my exploration of the early modern uncanny with the posthuman primate.^{xv} While Magno does not enjoy the bear-baiting at the Bear Garden, Fudge finds that the pleasure Magno takes in watching monkey-baiting indicative of the unique relationship between primates and humans. Fudge writes,

Magno's image of the monkey 'crying out'...is obviously and disturbingly anthropomorphic. There is a sense of recognition: the monkey is a creature similar to the human. Even to the pre-Darwinian sensibilities of the early modern period the link between human and ape is very clear. (Fudge 12)

Fudge argues that the monkey's physical likeness to Magno creates a doubling effect that reinforces his own humanity. "The monkey is both like him and not like him," she explains, "and it is in the comedy of such a spectacle that entertainment is found as the human remains a stable category throughout" (13). On the other hand, the bear-baiting, according to Fudge, represents an "alternative notion of the natural world," in which human dominion is limited. Recalling Nietzsche's claim in *On the Genealogy of Morals* that one must paradoxically take on the ruminating frame of mind of a cow to understand the distinction between the human and animal, Erica Fudge appropriately asks, "if thinking, reasoning, the thing which is so often used to distinguish the human from the animal, is bovine, where is the distinction? Where is the human?" (7). Regarding human reasoning in the 18th century, the prevailing theory which Locke, like Aristotle before him, championed suggested that "all our knowledge consists of generalizations from

experience" (Cheney & Seyfarth 2). Under this assumption, "anything we think or do can ultimately be traced to our experience" and the associations made therein which generate behavior (2). Kant's philosophy opposes this idea suggesting instead a distinction between experience and reason.

By introducing reason into the associative nature of experience, Kant suggests *a priori* knowledge. In other words, "to understand our thoughts, beliefs, and behavior...we must consider not only our own individual experiences but also the preexisting nature of the mind itself" (2). Darwin enters this conversation as a result of his work in evolution and his theory of natural selection. According to his theory, over the course of generations, animals adopt behaviors, or habits that have proved "beneficial to the individual involved" (3). This opposes the metaphysical theory supported by Locke since "instinctive behavior would (eventually) appear automatically, even if the animal had never before had the appropriate experience" (3). For Darwin, this did not mean animals failed to reason but that, though both appear distinctly present, it is difficult to distinguish where reason leaves off and instinct takes over in both human and nonhuman animals (3). As a result, while I agree with Fudge's observation that there is something unique about the monkey which makes its act preferable to the bear's, I posit that it is the alarming—even fearful—*challenge* to the spectator's own humanity afforded by the monkey's uncanny resemblance to humans which makes the monkey-baiting a more entertaining, rather than unpleasant, spectacle.

Magno's urge to project human linguistic acts onto the monkey ascribes it with a theory of mind which, rather than stabilize the category of human, opens it up to an

interpretation in which primates constitute valid associates. Similar to the way in which Banquo prioritizes clarifying the Sisters' meaning over stabilizing their personhood, the anthropomorphizing here indicates how language constructs our conceptions of both nonhuman animals and human relationships to them.

By exploring the uncanny as a feature of primitivism, *Macbeth* imagines primitivism as future-oriented, rather than retrospective. In addition to the emphasis on silence already explored, I will examine Macbeth's encounters with the Weird Sisters for other forms of silencing—namely, the emphasis on the visual over the aural and polyvocality—to further suggest how *Macbeth* temporally repositions primitivism. This orientation imagines primate species studies today in which the primitive figure simultaneously pre- and refigures the language used by those with whom it comes in contact.

My exploration of animal studies here relies heavily on the rendering of primates since their resemblances to humans elicit an uncanny effect. Despite the human loss of body hair along the evolutionary trajectory, the reflection of human-like qualities in the physiognomy of primates is, and has always been, striking. Seyfarth and Cheney explain that

[T]he Greeks and Romans recognized clearly that, among all animals, nonhuman primates were the creatures most similar to human beings. But there anatomy did not elevate their status; instead, quite the reverse occurred. Convinced, like Aristotle, that all animals were fundamentally different from humans on intellectual grounds, Classical scholars ignored both the anatomical evidence and Aristotle's argument for continuity of

emotions. Instead, they adopted a kind of 'reverse Darwinism' in which the more an animal resembled a human, the more it was shunned, made into an object of ridicule, and declared to be fundamentally different" (Seyfarth and Cheney 19).

In current practices, researchers have a very different view of primates and turn to them to investigate human nature. That the primates precede humans from an evolutionary standpoint yet succeed us from an ontological, epistemological, or research standpoint disrupts linear temporality or chronology by highlighting within scientific query the scope of our limitations. In other words, as we have progressed from primates, we also turn to them for indications and impressions of what we can learn about ourselves.

Refiguring the primitive as very much a feature of the present and, as such, implicated in very real ways in its future consequences, *Macbeth* presents a form of primitivism that is in sync with posthumanist concepts of temporality, a connection which shows up in practical application through animal studies. Cary Wolfe writes in *What is Posthumanism*, "the posthuman comes both after (chronologically) and *before* (as its robust material, embodied, evolutionary condition of possibility) the human of humanism" (Wolfe 121). Likewise, Mariana Torgovnick positions primitivism as a necessary precondition for Western conceptions of the self which, in effect, grants primitivism a place holder ahead of the current moment as it is simultaneously conceived as rudimentary. As much as one finds the foreignness between humans and animals indicative of our surmounted primitive instincts, we must rest within the discomfort created by the resemblances in the uncanny which indicate the limitations of our own

distinctions, forms, and procedures which gestures toward a need to imagine and articulate what Wolfe describes as an “unthinking” in animal studies today. This ‘unthinking’ is a concept I explore more fully in Chapter Two, but present briefly here as it is a concept which recognizes the unique communicative bond between humans and animals and also accounts for the “finitude that encompasses the human / animal difference” (Wolfe 123). This is useful for thinking about *Macbeth*’s imagining of a posthumanist discourse involving the dynamic between the primitive and the modern as it is mapped onto various ways of silencing the uncanny within the play.

In addition to their nonverbal gesture of silence, the emphasis on the visual over the aural, such as one finds in Act 4, Scene 1, indicates the limitations of language in the exchange between Macbeth and the Weird Sisters. One Sister asks, “Say, if thou’dst rather hear it from our mouths, Or from our masters?” to which Macbeth responds, “Call ‘em; let me see ‘em” (IV.i.62-63). Macbeth insists that the Sisters summon their masters, but not so that he might hear them as the Sisters suggest. Instead he fixates on a visual need to *see* the masters. His language prioritizes the image over the word in a move which reveals his inclination for truth revelation in a format congruent with a pre-linguistic primitivism. Language does not suffice; he instead appeals to the basic sense of sight for meaning-making. Furthermore, upon the arrival of the first apparition, Macbeth demands, “Tell me, thou unknown power—” but is interrupted by the Sister’s dismissal of his verbal address (IV.i.69). “He knows thy thought,” she explains, “hear his speech, but say thou nought” (IV.i.70). While their emphasis on the nonverbal and the visual over the aural suggests a silencing of the primitive, I find these characteristics, in conjunction with their amorphous polyphony, indicative of a primitive sensibility

regarding language that illuminates their seeming silence as proliferating and forward-oriented rather than undeveloped or base. A look at species studies helps clarify how these cryptic communicative measures offer more insight than they initially reveal.

In their book, *Baboon Metaphysics*, Dorothy Cheney and Robert Seyfarth discuss their research findings on baboon vocalizations and the complex relation between language and thought. Their work is the result of extensive vocal playback experiments among the Chacma baboons in Botswana's Moremi Game Reserve in the Okavango River Delta. Cheney and Seyfarth explain that "[b]ecause the baboons have endured interlopers for three decades, they are completely habituated to humans walking among them and tolerate our presence with diffident aplomb, if not affection" (12). Like Magno's description of the monkey at the Bear Garden, this language reveals ways in which Cheney and Seyfarth anthropomorphize the baboons. Defining the baboons' response to their presence from their own perspective signals a projection of their perceived impact on the environment. As much as they see the baboons respond to their presence with 'diffident aplomb' and 'affection,' their statement also reveals how they conceptualize their presence as warranting such benign responses. As Banquo scripts the Weird Sisters into uncanniness, Cheney and Seyfarth script the baboons into passivity. As John Andrew Fisher notes, "ascribing mental predicates (or terms for mental states) to animals does not occur by accident. It is guided by the observer's perception of the situation" (Fisher 70). Their own research indicates tension in their applying such mental states to the baboons.

Unlike human speakers, who routinely combine words into sentences according to grammatical rules that allow them to describe relations among events, monkeys and apes almost never string different call types together in any rule-governed, structured way. A female baboon may give a rapid succession of grunts as she approaches a mother with infant, but she is not combining grunts in any linguistic sense. She is just saying “Baby, baby, baby, baby, baby, baby” or “want, want, want” over and over again...without this grammatical device, primates cannot describe a causal relation between events... (Cheney & Seyfarth 256-57)

The primates’ inability to describe the causal relationship between events recalls the Weird Sisters’ linguistic practice of collapsing Macbeth’s rise to king into three succinct statements without revealing the causality. They polyphonically chant: “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!” in a sequence that fails to account for the periods of time between these transitions from Thane to King (I.iii.48-50). Their inability to fill in the gaps renders both the baboons and the Sisters’ outside of time. Freud’s foundational 1919 essay, “The ‘Uncanny’” incorporates these posthumanist ideas of disjointed time into these encounters by focusing on the automaton in relation to the human.

Freud’s work responds to E. Jentsch’s own essay on the uncanny in which he analyzes the presence and function of the life-like doll, Olympia, in Hoffmann’s short story, “The Sand-Man.” Reducing the uncanny to an intellectual uncertainty, Jentsch claims that

in telling a story, one of the most successful devices for easily creating uncanny effects is to leave the reader in uncertainty whether a particular

figure in the story is a human being or an automaton; and to do it in such a way that his attention is not directly focused upon his uncertainty, so that he may not be urged to go into the matter and clear it up immediately... (Freud 10).

Freud, however, separates this doubling effect into two distinct avenues for encountering the uncanny explaining, “an uncanny experience occurs either when repressed infantile complexes have been revived by some impression, or when the primitive beliefs we have surmounted seem once more to be confirmed” (17). This confirmation positions the primitive as a timeless figure; it is simultaneously rooted in the past *and* indicative of the future condition; the automaton, or other such primitive figure reaches beyond the human to a space of potentiality by figuring itself outside of time as do the Sisters. Stephen Greenblatt notices a similar construction of the automaton in early modern literature. He remarks on ways in which Christopher Marlowe’s Tamburlaine represents, “a desiring machine that produces violence and death,” which renders him outside of time (195). He notes that “Tamburlaine seeks literally to make an enduring mark in the world, to stamp his image on time and space...time so marked out should have a quality different from other time, should possess its end” (197-198). The desire to simultaneously encompass definitive finality and purported endurance marks an interesting binary captured by encounters with the primitive uncanny in *Macbeth*. The desire to possess and dispossess the self in these moments reinforces the concerns of chronological temporality problematized by the Weird Sisters.

Without being restricted to a temporal chronology in which they merely precede, the Sisters are able to fashion themselves as future-oriented primitive figures by

encouraging a look into the limitations of language. In other words, by representing a primordial expression that precedes differentiation, the Weird Sisters not only embody a primitive double for Macbeth to engage with retrospectively, but also prospectively by virtue of their temporal circularity. Although baboons lack language and theory of mind, Cheney and Seyfarth conclude their research by attributing our prelinguistic ancestors with a *language of thought* or ‘mentalese’ out of which evolved the verbalizing of thought. They write, “the discrete, compositional structure we find in spoken language did not first appear there. It arose, instead, because understanding social life and predicting others’ behavior requires discrete, compositional thinking” (272). The Weird Sisters’ polyphony speaks to these prelinguistic sensibilities.

By the end of their encounter in Act 4, Scene 1, the Sisters have become quite spritely, vocal and engaging in comparison to the solemnity with which they plan and execute their first meeting with Macbeth and Banquo upon the heath.^{xvi} They spontaneously decide to “charm the air to give a sound,” and perform an “antic round,” in a move that anticipates Nietzsche’s idea of primordial unity as it appears in his book, *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872) (*Mac* IV.i.129-130). Nietzsche describes the primordial unity, claiming,

Singing and dancing, man expresses his sense of belonging to a higher community; he has forgotten how to walk and talk and is on the brink of flying and dancing, up and away into the air above. His gestures speak of his enchantment. Just as the animals now talk and the earth gives milk and honey, there now sounds out from within man something supernatural: he feels himself to be a god, he himself now moves in such ecstasy and sublimity as once he saw the gods move in his dreams. Man is no longer an artist, he has become a work of art:

all nature's artistic power reveals itself here, amidst shivers of intoxication, to the highest, most blissful satisfaction of the primordial unity. (Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 18).

The Weird Sisters convey this sense of undifferentiated unity through multi-vocality which is most apparent in the choral chanting such as one finds in the repeated line, “double, double toil and trouble: / fire, burn; and, cauldron, bubble” (*Mac* IV.i.10-11). They also frequently speak in unison, an effect which makes them indistinguishable from one another as they fade into undifferentiated beings and “thus do go about, about: / Thrice to thine, and thrice to mine, / and thrice again to make up nine” (I.iii.34-36). The intermingling and blending into one another conveyed in this exponential fashioning reveals the Weird Sisters' inextricable unity. Finally, the Sisters' use of lyrical mimicry contributes to their united polyphony. They frequently repeat one another with phrases such as “Hail” and “All Hail Macbeth!” in Act 1 or “Show!” in Act 4 to create a polyphonic sound (I.i.62, I.i.49, IV.i.107). Moreover, the first Sister's command that Macbeth “Speak” in Act 4 is compounded by the second Sister's “Demand,” and the third's, “We'll answer” in multi-vocal meaning-making which contributes to the uncanny Sisters' undifferentiated nature, and effectively, to their primordial or primitive status. This tendency, in conjunction with their emphasis on silence and visuals, indicates their awareness of a communicative form that precedes and follows humanity, entering the human in a conversation with a community outside the self.

In this way, *Macbeth* anticipates and imagines the primitive concept of primordial unity posited by Nietzsche. By aligning with the primordial, the Sisters transcend individuation to reflect the fluid mobility between primitive instinct and modern reason

which Macbeth negotiates throughout the play. As uncanny doubles of Macbeth, the Sisters offer him a connection to the undifferentiated, unthinking, unreasoning realm of unity. Freud will link Nietzsche's primordial unity with the uncanny in his 1919 essay by noting that Hoffmann's use of the 'double' in *The Sand-Man* and other stories "are a harking-back to particular phases in the evolution of the self-regarding feeling, a regression to a time when the ego was not yet sharply differentiated from the external world and from other persons" (10).

Barbara Judson also considers this polyvocality in the formulation of the uncanny primitive. She suggests that Charles Brockden Brown's 1798 novel, *Wieland*, informs Percy Bysshe Shelley's conception of the uncanny in his 1820 play, *Prometheus Unbound*. Judson writes that Shelley "replaces eschatological terror with the uncanny dread felt in response to inscrutable voices that seem to announce a polymorphous, anarchic self, recalcitrant to reason" (Judson 27). This shift again reinforces the link between the uncanny and the primitive. The imagining of a self 'recalcitrant to reason' indicates a primitive doubling of the self that sharply juxtaposes the human capacity for reason and aligns his doubled self with the predatory, instinctual baseness of non-human animals. Freud claims that "the quality of uncanniness can only come from the circumstance of the 'double' being a creation dating back to a very early mental stage, long since left behind, and one, no doubt, in which it wore a more friendly aspect" (10). Rather than positioning reason as anterior to instinct, it would seem the primitive uncanny is more accurately imagined as reason and instinct in a dialectical relationship that offers a thesis and antithesis which gesture toward an imagined synthesis such as is required to account for the human limitations in species studies today. The Sisters'

polyvocality throughout the play, and eventual resolve to turn to singing and dancing in Act 4, mark Macbeth's irrevocable confrontation with the primitivism he believed surmounted. As a result, *Macbeth* offers a form of primitivism that is conditionally dynamic rather than temporally static.

By producing an uncanny effect in which Macbeth and Banquo face the primitivism they believed to have surmounted, the Weird Sister's represent the struggle between reason and instinct, a struggle conveyed through Macbeth's prioritizing of action over language as opposed to Banquo's verbose instinct to reason through his uncertainty. The Sisters act as both a mirror with which the men must engage and reckon with their reflections, and an image against which they attempt to construct an identity. As a result, I find that the ways of imagining primitivism expand to include not only static representations of a retrospective primitivism (sequential), but prospective types of primitivism in which the primitive being engages with the modern (or, in this case, early modern) subject rather than functioning as an origin from which the modern subject progresses and develops (consequential). Rearranging the spatial relationship between Macbeth and the Weird Sisters encourages a change in perspective regarding their temporal relationship. As their deferral in the first encounter reinforces, the Weird Sisters construct themselves as future-oriented from the play's opening line: "When shall we three meet again?" (*Mac* I.i.1). In this moment, the Sisters evoke the future, 'when shall,' with the past, 'again,' collapsing these opposing temporalities into a single moment. In addition to the play beginning with this incite to meet again, they speak solely of future happenings, and their failure to show up at the end of the play leaves the impending anticipation of their next arrival. The uncanny figures are consistently on the

horizon, just without grasp, and beyond language. As a result they achieve a representation of primitivism that is always deferred, always delayed, and as such, located in the future.

Freud notes that *Macbeth's* ghostly apparitions "may be gloomy or terrible enough, but they are no more really uncanny than is Homer's jovial world of gods" (18). The 'ghostly apparitions' to whom he refers specifically is unclear, but surely he does not mean to unite the Weird Sisters—although “they make themselves air, into which they vanish’d” on more than one occasion—with the apparitions in Act 4, Scene 1 under this umbrella term (*Mac* I.v.4-5). While the apparitions in Act 4 fail to meet the conditions he outlines for uncanniness, the Weird Sisters embody primitive beliefs seemingly surmounted but confirmed otherwise in their doubling of Macbeth. The effect is one of strange familiarity in our own designation of what constitutes ‘primitive’.

Humans study primates with the only tools with which we are equipped and offer answers in the only language we know how. This creates a disadvantage as we recognize the limitations that such parameters create in our effort to learn from the uncanny animals so that we may learn about ourselves. This dynamic requires an “unthinking” such as we see illustrated in Macbeth’s confrontation with his own primitivism in the very moments he encounters the uncanny primitive. Primitivism, constructed in this way as future-oriented, is in front of—as much as it is behind—Macbeth. Much like Freud’s sense of the uncanny being rooted in, and indivisible from, the canny, Macbeth is inextricably linked to the primitive. While my discussion in this chapter reveals the uncanny as a feature of the primitive figure that positions primitivism as future-oriented, in Chapter

Two I move away from the uncanny to address encounters with the primitive more generally to consider the implications of the animal gaze in constructing notions of primitivism.

CHAPTER TWO

UNDERSTANDING THE PRIMITIVE:

ENGAGING THE ANIMAL IN SHAKESPEARE'S *MACBETH*

"Now if tears *come to the eyes*, if they *well up in them*, and if they can also veil sight, perhaps they reveal, in the very course of this experience...an essence of the eye...the eye would be destined not to see but to weep. For at the very moment they veil sight, tears would unveil what is proper to the eye...the blindness that opens the eye is not one that darkens vision. The revelatory or apocalyptic blindness, the blindness that reveals the very truth of the eyes, would be the gaze veiled by tears."

(Derrida 126-27)

In Derrida's passage from *Memoirs of the Blind*, he describes Nietzsche's encounter with a horse in Turin. He looks into the animal's eyes hoping to discern its true nature. By projecting a very human quality onto the horse's tears, he appeals to the animal's ability to empathize. Anthropomorphizing the horse in the process, he suggests that tears signify a certain purity of understanding that transcends language and even species. The ability to understand requires being able to relate or recognize that which they have in common. If the horse's tears signify common ground between the human and animal, it would seem that this mutual understanding is contingent upon 'a revelatory blindness,' or a breakdown in the power of the gaze, or look, in the observer's consciousness. In other words, the ability to gaze with absolute agency or power must be compromised in order to see, with absolute clarity, the encountered figure.

The concept of power and agency is closely linked to the gaze of an ‘observant eye,’ a crucial feature in the field of species studies as such studies are contingent upon—no matter how regulated or limited—interspecies interaction and the consequences thereof. Such a gaze appears quite clearly in *Macbeth* when Rosse recounts his encounter with the horses in Act 2:

Old Man

‘Tis unnatural,
Even like the deed that’s done. On Tuesday last,
A falcon, towering in her pride of place,
Was by a mousing owl hawk’d at, and kill’d

Rosse.

And Duncan’s horses (a thing most strange and certain)
Beauteous and swift, the minions of their race,
Turn’d wild in nature, broke their stalls, flung out,
Contending ‘gainst obedience, as they would make
War with mankind.

Old M.

‘Tis said, they eat each other.

Rosse.

They did so; to th’amazement of mine eyes,
That look’d upon’t

Mac 2.4.10-19

In this scene, the animals depict two corruptions of natural order which capture human interest and attract and maintain the focus of the human gaze. The inversion of the food chain as the owl kills the falcon, and cannibalism as ‘they eat each other’, illustrate the primitive being’s agency and, thus, a prompting or opening for mutual understanding. Fudge writes that “in writings dealing with the animal in early modern England—whether theological, humanist, scientific or legal—the animal is represented as

the antithesis of the human” (4). However, *Macbeth* presents an animal realm with a likeness to humans, which rescinds Fudge’s observation.

Harting notes in *The Ornithology of Shakespeare* that, “why the owl has been called the ‘bird of wisdom’ it is not easy to determine. Possibly because it can see in the dark, and is the only bird which looks straightforward” (Harting 94). Harting calls our attention to the Old Man’s observation that there is some human quality which suggests the owl’s capacity for inherent wisdom. The Old Man compares the likenesses between human actions and representations in nature indicating evenness, flushness, or closeness in his phrase ‘*even like*’; however, this similarity is indicative of something greater than reflection. His language suggests a breakdown in distinctions in kind. Pulling away from this notion of human / animal interaction, Rosse resists this similarity and estranges himself from the animal by calling attention to the gaze, stating ‘to th’amazement of mine eyes / that look’d upon’t.’ Attempting to firmly place himself in the role of observer, Rosse appeals to the power of the gaze and, in doing so, constructs the horses’ action as a separation from—rather than engagement with—him. However, in the attempt to estrange himself from the scene, he achieves, through this announcement, the opposite effect.

In Chapter One, I discuss ways in which Macbeth’s encounters with the uncanny Weird Sisters imagines a future-oriented primitivism. Through these encounters, Macbeth faces his own primitive sensibilities. One of the ways I consider this is by suggesting an understanding between the primitive figure and the modern figure that exists beyond the point of language. By looking at moments of silence or silencing

within the text, it becomes clear how these techniques of silencing actually highlight ways of understanding beyond language. In this chapter, I consider the encounters with non-human animals offered in *Macbeth* to explore how a breakdown in language at the site of these encounters reflects a breakdown in distinction between the human and the animal to reveal spaces in which mutual understanding can take place.

In addition to expanding the types of primitive figures examine, I also pull the focus away from *Macbeth* to consider how the experiences of peripheral characters inform our understanding of Macbeth's relationship to the Weird Sisters as explored in Chapter One. I first look at Lady Macduff's reaction to Macduff fleeing from home in Act Four as well as Rosse's aforementioned encounter with the horses in Act Two. In Act Four Lady Macbeth asserts that in his turn away from wisdom, Macduff reverts to a non-human sensibility in which instinct outweighs wisdom. However, her own argument renders the division between instinct and reason difficult to distinguish, indicating in the process that, as Plotkin suggests, "We think adaptively rather than logically...this 'ancient' way of thinking is thought to have been moulded by the requirements of social exchange" (Plotkin 195). This requirement of social exchange constitutes one reason that I maintain a focus on species studies involving primates specifically.

Although the textual examples I explore within *Macbeth* involve human engagement with animals other than primates, I have chosen to maintain a focus on recent species studies that specifically involve primates for a couple of reasons. The first is to elucidate interspecies engagement which parallels the encounter dramatized in *The Okavango Macbeth*, and the second involves the unique way in which the primate is in

dialogue with both of the primitive subjects explored here: the uncanny *and* the animal. While the play itself does not specifically mention primates more than twice (both of which occur in Act 4), the connections between these references reinforce our exploration of primates in species studies here.

One Sister completes the charm that opens Act Four by “cool[ing] it with a baboon’s blood” (IV.i.37). This reference to primates is recalled in the next scene by Lady Macduff as she laments for her fatherless son: “Now God help thee, poor monkey!” (IV.ii.58). Although the primate is recalled specifically, I find that the echo formulates a connection between the Weird Sister’s primitive reference and Lady Macduff’s incorporation of other animals—in particular, the wren—into this dialogue. If, as I suggest in Chapter One, the Weird Sister’s present to Macbeth a primitive figure that produces an uncanny effect, then this shared reference functions as a common nod to the primitive. By also acknowledging the basic similarity between nonhuman and human primates, Lady Macduff’s birds are read as primitive in an evolutionary capacity similar to that embodied by the Weird Sisters as they confront the human in what appears to be a biologically undeveloped state.^{xvii} Henry Plotkin notes that “The evolutionary origin of primate intelligence, including that of humans, is at least in part that of social transaction and social abstraction...such social activity, such ‘politicizing’, takes time...and this reduces the time available for interacting with the non-social world and extracting from it crucial resources” (Plotkin 183-184). Therefore, the capabilities that humans possess, especially the ability to reason and an awareness of self (or theory of mind), indicate a few ways in which animals are—in this more general sense of the term—primitive to the human but also indicate ways the human is out of touch with the non-social world.

Alverdes claims that determining the consciousness of animals is "an insoluble problem" (18). Taking human relationships as evidence, he notes our inability to discern anything substantial regarding the consciousness of another human being. "We can only conclude that it is much the same as, or more or less similar, to our own...in the case of animals, we are quite unable to come to any decision at all" (Alverdes 18-19). While his claim regarding human to human encounters may be true, perhaps there are some things which become apparent in human to animal encounters which otherwise remain concealed in species to species interactions.

Consider, for instance, the chimpanzee, the primate most similar to humans in terms of genetic makeup, emotional and physical responses, and cognitive abilities.

Roger and Deborah Fouts note that

the difference between chimpanzees and humans is one of degree, just as it is with all of our fellow animals. This evidence is consistent with the Darwinian notion of continuity that we are all relatives...this scientific evidence contradicts the Dark Ages view that "Man" is different in kind from his fellow animals, which has been used to justify nonhuman-animal exploitation. Ironically, this extreme similarity of chimpanzees to humans has also worked against their welfare. (Fouts and Fouts 106)

The use of Chimpanzees in AIDS, hepatitis, and brain-injury research constitutes only a few ways in which Chimpanzees' similarity to humans is utilized in research studies while researchers, paradoxically, fail to recognize the moral and ethical implications that such similarities also harbor (106).^{xviii} If, as we find in *Macbeth*, animals can be refashioned to represent a view more bio- than anthropocentric, we can examine the way the language interrupts the engagement in these species studies.

To add to the discussion of silence in the first chapter, I look to moments in which the language that fills that silence similarly gestures to a failure of reason. What I suggest we find in the place of language is the impact of the gaze. As Derrida indicates, the power of the gaze plays an important role in this relationship between the primitive and the modern, or—as this dynamic is explored here—the animal and the human. If Chapter One suggests a connection beyond language, largely signified by silence or forms of silencing, in this chapter I offer ways of reading moments in which humans and animals exchange gazes as a means by which to fill the space rendered mutual through a breakdown in language.

Rather than project or prescribe meaning onto the animal, this engagement requires occupying these spaces which carry the potential for understanding and meaning-making to take place. I offer the gaze as one way of occupying these spaces which ultimately suggests the animal potential in the face of human limitations—a startling revelation for humans as a species content with having overcome and mastered non-human species.^{xix} There is, I believe, an emphasis on the gaze in *Macbeth* which speaks to the way in which human / animal relationships are described and critiqued in species studies today. These representations reveals how ways of apprehending interspecies encounters today are informed by the constructions of primitivism shaped in an early modern context. Erica Fudge discusses the early modern conception of this relationship. She writes that “the ways in which being human is defined rely on the exercise of certain skills, such as speaking, and in the exercise of human-ness the animal becomes an important player in history. It becomes the thing which the human is constantly setting itself against” (1). While Fudge explores the way in which humans

define themselves as humans “in the face of the animal,” what I explore in *Macbeth* are the ways in which a breakdown in language during animal engagement reveals the similarity inherent between primitive beast and developed human. This is a similarity which reveals the vulnerability that being human carries. Animals can be refashioned to engage with—rather than respond to—human constructions of the world, and, in doing so, challenge—if it is not necessarily our ability to reason—what constitutes personhood within that world.

Rather than offer a space in *Macbeth* in which men are defined against the animal, this engagement forces them to recognize the agency that animals maintain in the face of human construction. In doing so, the text reveals a breakdown in the primitive / modern binary, offering instead a more complex dialectic such as we see revealed between *Macbeth* and the uncanny in Chapter One.

Situating animals as primitive to humans requires maintaining that animals lack consciousness or theory of mind. However as Henry Plotkin notes, “All normal humans are rational in the general sense of having the ability to reason. But though rational, there is a large body of evidence that shows we are not very logical, consistent or informed in our reasoning abilities” (190). Alverdes distinguishes between the *mechanism* and *vitalism* of this mindedness. The former refers to “the interaction of highly complicated physic-chemical processes which take place in the substances constituting the organism;” the latter attributes response to an immaterial agent that indicates a priori knowledge. This is a distinguishing feature Goethe describes in his last letter in 1892 claiming, “the animal is taught by its organs; man teaches his and controls them.” While

anthropomorphizing involves ascribing mental predicates to otherwise viscerally responding animals, I find that the text achieves reverse anthropomorphizing by dramatizing how mankind's use of language to describe these human / nonhuman encounters acquiesces to the gaze. We see the way in which Rosse's attempt to characterize the actions he witnesses in the animals yields to his primal response to the stimuli to create an effect which indicates the pervious relationship between human and animal.

Colin Allen notes that "the problem of determining whether animals are conscious...or 'mere automata' as Cartesians would have it...stretches the limits of knowledge and scientific methodology (beyond breaking point according to some)" (2011). Kristen Andrews, on the other hand, notes that "while there are arguments against animal minds, the cognitive scientists studying animals largely accept that animals are minded cognitive systems" (2011). F Alverdes writes that

Direct understanding is possible between animals: the more distant the species of animals, the more difficult is understanding. Between man and animal, mutual understanding is also possible within limits. But man is often excluded from such understanding of animal behavior because much in the animal takes place on the basis of inherited aptitude for activity (instinct, primary knowledge), whereas man, for his part, is obliged to acquire by experience, as secondary knowledge, practically everything. (147)

What Alverdes observes here is in dialogue with Wolfe's concept of "unthinking." This 'unthinking' is, for Wolfe, a posthumanist concept that "unhinges the humanism coordinates of vision (in relation to spatiality) and voice (in relation to sound...that forces us beyond the simple dialectical reversal and elevation of the terms banished by humanism to subservient status (the Real, the Thing, the feminine, and so on)" (202).

These encounters between the human and animal present an opportunity in which to expand our ways of seeing that exercises our vision in ways Derrida suggests.

Understanding the primitive depends on more than an encounter; one must also engage the primitive subject. However, doing so requires facing their allegedly surmounted primary knowledge.

Yet, this inclination is mirrored in Macbeth elsewhere in Act Four as he announces a similar turn toward the primitive. He declares

From this moment,
The very firstlings of my heart shall be
The firstlings of my hand. And even now,
To crown my thoughts with acts, be in thought and done
Mac 4.1.146-149

In these lines Macbeth trades reason for instinct. His reference to the crown (a symbol of civilization, sovereignty, and order) emphasizes his intent to discard his humanity to assume a bestial position regarding thought and action that eliminates the reasoning between instinct and deed. In the same way that Lady Macduff accuses Macduff of foregoing wisdom (reason) for fear (instinct), in this moment, Macbeth discards the quality that makes him human. Here, I consider the way in which Lady Macduff's preoccupation with birds and flight is in an interesting dialogue with Rosse and the Old Man's conversation regarding the owl killing the falcon. I also explore the way in which Rosse describes Duncan's horses and the impact of the gaze in these spaces excavated for mutual understanding.

Neel Ahuja has described these spaces of interaction as 'Ecologies of Representation' which "trace the ways in which historically situated zones of contact

between peoples and nonhuman species create the conditions of possibility for semiotic activities in defined fields of social power” (559). Ahuja describes the breeding colony of 408 rhesus monkeys imported from northern India to Cayo Santiago, an islet southeast of mainland Puerto Rico by Columbia University’s School of Tropical Medicine as one such ‘Ecology of Representation’ featuring a multispecies landscape.

Ahuja’s article points out a moment of transspecies interaction in Cayo Santiago in which the animal gaze plays a formative role in the interspecies encounter. Hansel Mieth’s well-known portrait of a swimming macaque (Figure 1), featured in Life magazine in 1939, is accompanied by a caption that suggests that the monkey’s distressed expression with furrowed brow is a response to “the chatter of innumerable female monkeys” (560).



Figure 1

Photo: Life Magazine ©1939

Ahuja criticizes this reduction pointing out that “if we are to take seriously nonhuman performance and representation, we must acknowledge the monkey’s own gaze...the use

of a camera might provoke the rhesus to angrily stare down the photographer [and] should remind us that visual culture is also a multispecies domain” (560). I would add to Ahuja’s criticism that Mieth’s inclination to anthropomorphize the macaques’ motivation is all the more interesting since it signals a breakdown in language’s ability to account for the interaction. Similarly, the visual culture of *Macbeth* appears to tell us that the animals are more than a reflection; they engage with humans and indicate ways in which we might be capable of more than we are able to understand. These interactions recall Derrida’s words regarding the horse’s eye. If the truth of the eye is revealed in a “gaze veiled by tears,” the eye’s true purpose is to seek to understand, to empathize—not to function as an observing, judging, prescribing gaze. The gazes explored here are not as literal as Hansel Mieth’s exchange with the Rhesus Macaque, but function in a similar way to indicate either the transparent or opaque way in which the figures engage. If the power of the gaze privileges the observer rather than the observed, then Lady Macduff’s description of the wren—though not a physical gazing upon the animal—represents a symbolic gaze in which she turns the wren into an object for her own fashioning to assert her own consciousness.

Marianna Torgovnick writes that primitive figures “exist for us in a cherished series of dichotomies: by turns gentle, in tune with nature, paradisaical, ideal--or violent, in need of control; what we should emulate or, alternately, what we should fear; noble savages or cannibals” (3). The primitive embodies conflicting ideas at once. This destabilized notion of primitivism makes it difficult to decipher these complex and dynamic encounters. Recognizing the potential for negotiation, the notion of primitivism fails to function as a fixed idea against which to define the modern. By looking at

moments in *Macbeth* in which characters describe human interactions or relationships with animals, I reveal ways in which, through a breakdown in language, the primitive figures represent active and engaging agency in the moment they are anthropomorphized—a move which exposes human vulnerability and capacity for the empathy Derrida describes. That this agency is revealed in this paradoxical moment of subjugation suggests that the primitive is always an unsettled concept within *Macbeth*. Understood as unfixed, then, the modern must recognize the primitive figure as engaging, the interaction, as consequential. The play's representation of the animal as both unstable and inconsistent mimics the human experience in unsettling ways.

As mentioned, this exploration expands the notion of the primitive figure explored earlier to include non-human animals. If not necessarily primitive in an evolutionary capacity (such as those explored in parallels between the Weird Sisters and primates in Chapter one), animals are primitive to humans from a developmental standpoint. Primitivism is explored in this way elsewhere by Darby Proctor and Sarah Brosnan who, although they rely heavily on research involving primates to consider the human evolutionary and biological predisposition for political mindedness, are also mindful of the fact that nonhuman animals in a broader sense are useful for comparing human behavioral patterns (56). Furthermore, Han Hass' work does not strictly explore primates as figuring primitive to humans but explores an entire network of animals to reveal trends in human and animal behavior. He claims,

In view of the evidence assembled during the last 100 years, there can be no serious doubt that all higher animals and plants are descended from unicellular organisms. We can now state, with a confidence verging on certainty, that insects

and spiders are descended from marinethropods; that existing terrestrial vertebrates evolved from fish; that reptiles are descended from amphibians; that from reptiles are evolved birds on the one hand and mammals on the other; and that man is descended from two now-extinct branches of the large ape family. We are thus related not only to apes but also to lizards, batrachians, fish, unicellular organisms--yes, even to plants. (Hass 18)

Taking a cue from Hass' note that from reptiles are evolved birds on the one hand and mammals on the other, I explore *Macbeth's* references to both birds and horses to discuss ways in which each offers rich examples of how the language reveals how these human figures are drawn to, and cannot avoid or overcome, their primitive instincts. In Rosse's retelling of his encounter with the horses in Act 2, and Lady Macduff's imagining of the wren in Act 4, each occupy a position of consciousness as possessors of the gaze, yet their language indicates ways in which the objects, namely the animals, indicate or show agency in these very moments to reveal the relation between human and animals.

The birds of *Macbeth* are an animal worth exploring for their engagement with humans. Although there is no direct interaction with birds, varieties are referenced throughout the text. In Act 1 alone, "The raven is hoarse" (I.v.38); "sparrows" dismay "eagles" (I.ii.35); and "this bird / hath made his pendent bed" (I.vi.7-8). Of particular interest to this exploration of the primitive gaze is Lady Macduff's reference to the wren and the owl in Act 4. She does not cast a gaze directly on a wren, but the construction of the wren she creates in her mind's eye suggests a similar dynamic between primitive and early modern figures.

Rosse.
You know not,
Whether it was his wisdom, or his fear.

Lady Macd.

Wisdom! to leave his wife, to leave his babes,
His mansion, and his titles, in a place
From whence himself does fly? He loves us not:
He wants the natural touch; for the poor wren,
The most diminutive of birds, will fight,
Her young ones in her nest, against the owl.
All is fear, and nothing is the love;
As little is the wisdom, where the flight
So runs against all reason.

Mac 4.2.5-14

Reverend Jacques Abbadie writes in his 1695 work *The Art of Knowing One-Self, or, an Enquiry into the Sources of Morality* that all the vices and passions of mankind initiate from and terminate in self-love, thus marking self-love as the “primitive root of our evil and corruption” (Abbadie 127). Lady Macduff’s criticism of Macduff’s leave from home recalls this primitive evil or corruption. Abbadie contends that “for when two passions violently combat, fear, for instance, and revenge, the soul retires into its own tent; and makes use of no other counsel, but that of self-love, to know what side it ought to take” (127). Lady Macduff aligns Macduff’s actions against those of animals thus aligning his sense of instinct with the primitive evil Abbadie outlines in this passage regarding self-love in the human subject. In doing so, Lady Macduff positions the wren as metaphysically primitive to the human as a result of its inability to reason in moments of fear, yet somehow posthuman by virtue of its ability to fight for love rather than run for fear. Here, Macduff’s ‘want’ implies his lack of the natural, but his inclination to fly in this fight-or-flight moment indicates his primitive sensibility toward corruption through self-love (as outlined by Abbadie) which emerges in the form of self-preservation in these moments of impending violence.

Defining Macduff's actions against those of the bird, however, requires Lady Macduff's grafting of otherwise unaccounted for characteristics upon the wren. Quoting Spivak's essay 'Can the Subaltern Speak' in which Spivak suggests that "The subaltern cannot speak...Representation has not withered away," John Drabinski notes that "there must be speaking for, even where such speaking is conceptually and ethically unimaginable" (85). While Spivak and Drabinski speak of the woman as the subaltern figure to consider the epistemological fracture at work in communication with subordinate figures, the epistemological fracture also applies to the primitive figures I explore here.

Without language, animals are rendered a figure of eternal silence. Within this silence, Drabinski's claim that there 'must be speaking for' is not without its own set of problematic components. As Lady Macduff projects primitive characteristics onto the wren, the wren no longer speaks for itself. Her effective pun on Macduff's decision to flee which '*runs* against all wisdom,' reveals that she aligns fleeing from fear with lacking reason. The wren, a bird free to fly at leisure, according to Lady Macduff remains to fight—not because it is the reasonable thing to do, she claims—because of fear. Lady Macbeth situates the wren—a fundamentally un-reason-able animal—as more capable of human reasoning than Macbeth even as she incites his move as lacking in wisdom, and therefore, reason. However, the wren maintains agency as it escapes fashioning. In other words, Lady Macduff's inability to correctly characterize the bird's response as more basic than the human response exposes a crack in the line designated to separate human from animal. Lady Macduff's speaking for the wren is flawed. In his footnotes to the text, Kenneth Muir writes that "it need not worry us that the wren is not

the smallest of birds, nor that it would not fight in defense of its young” (118). I, on the other hand, find these to be observations worth exploring. Muir’s claim that it need not matter suggests that Lady Macduff’s rhetoric succeeds where her argument fails. As my description of *mentalese* in Chapter One explains, Cheney and Seyfarth reveal the human capacity for language is a human trait for which there is a traceable evolutionary propensity. Language is, effectively, following a natural instinct. Muir’s comment suggests that while Lady Macduff’s words fail, her ideas are conveyed in a way that makes her intention clear. If Muir *is* correct, then I would suggest, it is because there is an instinct to respond to her intended meaning even if her facts regarding the wren are incorrect. What this indicates is that the instinctual aspect for meaning making through language reinforces the primitive evolution of the human capacity for language acquisition.

In her moment of imagining the animal’s size and inclination to fight, she desires to estrange herself from the primitive. She attempts to position the wren as the human antithesis, but her attempt fails where her reason does, and she manages to only reinforce the likeness of a shared primitive spirit within the two. In doing so, she not only commits the “unimaginable” as outlined by Drabinski, but her attempt to reverse anthropomorphize Macduff—in other words, relegate his humanness—illustrates her desire to conceal the innate vulnerability of the human capacity for ‘primitive instincts.’ However, these propensities are anticipated even before she criticizes Macduff’s actions as she invokes the image of flying before ever introducing the image of the bird.

Lady Macduff asks “what had he done, to make him fly the land?” and declares that “his flight was madness,” before insisting fear was the instinct for which “himself

does fly” from the comforts of home life” (*Mac* IV.ii.1, 3, 8). However, aligning his mode of departure with that natural to the wren complicates her claim that “he wants the natural touch.” His affinity for flight suggests he does, indeed, possess the instinctual responsive nature that such a natural touch would grant him.

The horses offer an interesting perspective on this mutual space by disrupting both intra- and inter-species dynamics. In pulling away from the horses as a human observer of animal interactions, Rosse physically pulls away from the primitive to reinforce his perception of their cognitive distance with physical distance. He becomes an outsider, observer, but in that moment he references his gaze and suddenly his language is compromised; he is rendered speechless and appeals to his gaze to signify his human distance from the encounter rather than his cognitive ability to explain it linguistically.

The horses’ meaning has been considered elsewhere to be connected to this primitive instinct. Bert O. States finds the horse imagery in *Macbeth* as symbolizing Macbeth's passionate drive. His observations are in line with Freud's idea "that the relation of the ego to the id is like that of a man on horseback who has to hold in check the superior strength of the horse. Often however, the horse takes the bit and carries the rider where it wants to go" (States 58). The id's will is performed as though it were the ego's intent to do so. States situates Macbeth as inhabiting the future since his ego debates the good and ill of his "supernatural solicitings" while, as States suggests, his id has already committed the murders. This agency legitimizes the primitive instinct in the very moments the human characters seek to reinforce the superiority of humanity. Simon

Estok points out how Cary Wolfe has argued that “the humanist concept of subjectivity is inseparable from the discourse and *institution* of speciesism which relies on the tacit acceptance that the full transcendence of the human requires the sacrifice of the “animal” and the animalistic...” (150).^{xx} While Freud notes in *The Future of an Illusion* (1927) that “Cannibalism alone [of the oldest instinctual wishes] seems to be universally proscribed and—to the non-psychoanalytic view—to have been completely surmounted” the horses in *Macbeth* engage with the human characters to suggest a different interpretation (13). Seeing this behavior in an animal, Rosse is quick to separate himself from the horse’s nature so as to confirm his perception of humanity’s full transcendence. Although the horses’ cannibalism is not literally engaged with the human behavior, it quite apparently parallels man devouring man in *Macbeth*. Readers will recall a moment in *Henry V* in which a comparable relationship is established between horses, cannibalism, and human-to-human conflict to similarly break down this human / animal distinction or transcendence described by Wolfe.

The Dauphin suggests an awareness of the early modern classifications or hierarchies which privileged humans over animals—and certain animals over others—when he asserts that his own horse is “indeed a horse, and all other jades you may call beasts” (*H5* III.vii.23-4).^{xxi} The distinction breaks down when, regarding his horse, the Dauphin claims, “When I bestride him, I soar, I am a hawk” (III.vii.15). The Dauphin’s metaphor is interesting for a few reasons. His emphatic ‘I am a hawk,’ declared as he encounters the animal, resonates overwhelmingly as a manifestation of his primitive

instinct; he is not merely like a hawk, he *becomes* the hawk. Following his evolution into the animal, Orleans and Rambures are quick to reference his cannibalistic desire.

Orleans

The Dauphin longs for morning.

Rambures

He longs to eat the English

Constable

I think he will eat all he kills

(*H5* III.vii.88-90)

The Dauphin's blind hunger for power encourages Orleans and Rambures to comment on his primitive sensibilities. While Rosse describes himself as witness to the cannibalism, his attempt to pull away from the animals similarly fails to depict animals as the antithesis of the human. In the same way that the gaze ('to th'amazement of mine eyes, / That look'd upon't') validates—makes true—the word ('Tis said'), the horses actions toward one another indicates and supports rather than denies the same desire or ability in human interaction. Rosse's inability to adopt a revelatory blindness that reinforces the human capacity for empathy instead of the obstructing gaze that emphasizes the developmental distance between himself and the horses appeals to their desire to surmount rather than engage the primitive.

Lady Macbeth depicts a similar desire to spatially fashion herself away from her primitive instinct in clinging to the taper. After Duncan's death she realizes the primitive instinct is very much a part of her, and Lady Macbeth clings to the taper in order to avoid the truth of this realization; she clings to a thing of fire—the element separating her from animal. Animal obedience is one of the features promised by

Prometheus as he gives the gift of fire to the humans thereby separating them from beasts in Aeschylus' play. Their lack of obedience to humans and seeming inclination to "make war with mankind" suggests that the horses return the gaze.

As we have seen recalled and imagined in these interactions with animals in *Macbeth*, it seems we can discover things about the human only discoverable through engagements with animals. What these engagements reveal is the vulnerability inherent in the animal—human and non-human. This vulnerability, as these engagements suggest, shows how these seemingly surmounted instincts emerge in the moments when the human most vehemently asserts the power of the gaze. In Chapter One, I mention the need to rest in the discomfort created by the unfamiliar or foreign aspects of the uncanny as doing so creates a space in which to imagine ourselves in new ways. The converse is also necessary to properly understand interspecies interactions. It is necessary to push beyond the unfamiliar to consider what exists in common. This vulnerability gestures to a mutual understanding between the human and the animal which requires a hearing beyond sound and a seeing beyond sight.

Animal influences the world of mankind, and vice-versa, which anticipates and contrasts Rosse's propensity for estrangement or separation from these potentialities of the human in the natural world. By placing the animals in the position of demanding engagement rather than acquiescing to the human, the primitive is a force with which the human must not only recognize as thriving in the present moment, but also engage and conceptualize ways in which we talk *for* while talking *about* animals. In Ahuja's article he remarks that despite measures taken to transform Cayo Santiago's landscape into one

resembling the monkeys' usual habitat, the monkeys proved resistant to this pseudo-natural environment and instead took to destroying the vegetation and swimming to mainland Puerto Rico (560). We learn from Ahuja that human / nonhuman interaction was limited, and eye contact was avoided, but the platforms still convey the presence of something unnatural or supernatural in the environment signaling a site of possibility in power negotiation. Ahuja notes that "tearing down the imperialist fantasy of tropical nature, the animals forced scientists to establish feeding stations. This provisioning of the monkeys had material and semiotic effects, training them to see built platforms and human beings as part of social life" (560). The integrity of the school's plan to provide the colony a natural environment was compromised by this delicate, albeit significant, change. The platform is a response to active agents, in this case, the colonized monkeys who refused to settle in an unnatural environment.

The monkey's response, like that of the horses', captures the threat of an unperceiving, prescribing, gaze. As Rosse looks on without seeing himself in the horses, the quality of empathy that also validates his humanity is sacrificed. Similarly, Lady Macduff's unfounded projection of the wren reveals in her a primitive inability to reason at the site of her appeal to humanness. The way in which each of these encounters reflects back onto the human their inability to overcome the primitive is suggestive of a commonality only discoverable amid human / animal interactions which gesture to knowledge beyond human epistemological limitations. Although unable to articulate these mutual understandings, the gaze—both literally and figuratively exchanged in these encounters—levels the distinction between human and nonhuman animals.

CONCLUSION

DRAMATIZING THE GAZE IN *THE OKAVANGO MACBETH*

In Alexander McCall Smith's opera, the baboons and primatologists recognize one another as cousins. The primatologists are quick to describe baboons as "the cousin of man;" however, the baboons determine that "cousins at such a distance / are not [their] affair" (McCall Smith 2.57 & 125-127). There is an instant awareness of similarity between the two species that suggests to both that there may exist between them the grounds for mutual understanding—despite the latter's inclination to avoid it. Relationships between similarly situated figures in *Macbeth* anticipate the scientist / subject dynamic explored in McCall Smith's adaptation. While the scientists' role encourages and even requires maintaining a professional distance, they recognize the stakes of engagement. The primatologists claim that "science is a hard-hearted / mistress, who lets things happen" (2.68-70). However, the human gaze is suffused with a problematic power that, in stripping the baboons of their agency, encourages a response in which that agency is asserted. That these conceptions are anticipated in early modern England and represented in the relationships between the human / the uncanny and the human / the animal is evident in the way *Macbeth* imagines and dramatizes encounters with primitive subjects.

In the previous chapters I have explored ways in which the shutting down of language addresses how humans improperly mediate interspecies interactions. In Chapter One through silence and the silencing of the primitive in its uncanny form and in Chapter Two through the shutting down of language as a catalyst for engagement I have attempted to blend the otherwise sharp delineation between human and animal. This breakdown suggests the limits of human exploration and, rather than as a thesis / antithesis binary, the breakdown gestures toward synthesis as a more appropriate way of apprehending human and animal natures.

The Weird Sisters acknowledge or indicate to Macbeth the present existence of a base, primitive instinct, which—although it runs against mankind’s reasonable nature and is believed surmounted in early modern England—anticipates the encounters featured in interspecies interactions in species studies today. Through various forms of silencing, I discuss in Chapter One how the encounters with the primitive highlight the limitations of language. This fashioning of the primitive as simultaneously pre- and post- ‘human’ unsettles the conceptions of the primitive as strictly past.

In Chapter Two I discuss the breakdown or collapse of language as indicated either through a yielding to the gaze in Rosse’s case or failure to reason in Lady Macduff’s. That these failures occur during interspecies interaction position these interactions as spaces excavated within the text for understanding and mutual meaning-making to take place. As with the silence in Chapter One, the failure of language gestures to an alternate mode of communication necessary to relate and perhaps even empathize with the nonhuman animal—one which, I posit, is revealed in the shared gaze

that seeks not to prescribe but understand. A breakdown in the gaze's power, such as Derrida suggests of Nietzsche's horse in Turin, facilitates recognition of interspecies relationships. Rather than distance the human and the animal, the gaze veiled by tears (which unlike language is not restricted to human cognition) admits both to a space in which semiotic negotiations can take place. Adding to Chapter One's discussion of the primitive figure as future-oriented, this shift away from language such as we find in Rosse's encounter with the horses and Lady Macduff's wren, reinforces the position of futurity while adding to it an acknowledgement of the animal's agency.

The primatologists' observing eye hinders their ability to see the baboons clearly. Responding to this fashioning, the baboons commit "internecine carnage," an act the baboons previously claim unique to humans. As the story of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* we recognize this murder in an instant, but when it is mapped onto this naturalized setting, the connections to species studies and apprehending the primitive 'other' that the early modern text anticipates also become overwhelmingly apparent.

While the act of producing and performing a baboon opera is itself a form of anthropomorphism, it articulates nicely the problematic limitations of species studies regarding *how* we talk about encounters with animals. While I have suggested ways in which Mieth's anthropomorphizing of the Rhesus Monkey is artistically valuable as an example of the problematic way in which we project human characteristics upon the animal, Cheney and Seyfarth's propensity to defend their position among the baboons in a research environment fails, in a similar manner, to account for the animal gaze.

What do we hear when the animals are given a voice as they are in *The Okavango Macbeth*? According to the baboons, the primatologists are “strange, unfinished creatures” that “do not belong,” and should be ignored since they are

The most dangerous of beasts;
They kill for pleasure,
For the pleasure of the blood,
Destroying everything,
They will consume the earth.

(2.116-120)

As a result, the baboons are determined to ignore these “odd” and “hairless” creatures as the primatologists take an observant eye “like the watching camera...from whom no secrets / are hidden,” to watch the baboon “in whose ways,” they explain, “we may see our own” (2.50-52 & 58-59). The primatologists acknowledge at the site of the encounter the similarity between the human and non-human primates which evades language. When it is eventually revealed that the baboons are capable of killing for pleasure, the startling impact of the human gaze is confirmed in what is conveyed as subversive agency. While Duncan’s murder seemingly reflects human characteristics, the fact that this murder occurs in the midst of an encounter with the human emphasizes the baboons’ engagement with—rather than mere reflection of—the human.

The interaction between species wherein spoken language does not serve communicative purposes creates a space that invites other modes of interaction and understanding. As tears welling up in the horse’s eye indicated to Nietzsche a deeper understanding, these failures of language to properly convey their intended meaning

suggests, to use Barbara Judson's phrase, a "self recalcitrant to reason" (27). When the human and the animal suddenly occupy a neutral space, their encounters turn to engagements. In order to empathize, one must be able to relate to, to understand, to recognize the self in, another.

More than an indicator or reflection of the unnatural state of human affairs, the animals also successfully reposition primitivism as an active participant in the anticipated future rather than a resolved ideology as Torgovnick suggests when she claims that "primitivism exist[s] as a global whole--complete, knowable, definable" (Torgovnick 3). In *Macbeth* there is no *returning* to the primitive or *reverting* to the primitive instinct. Instead, their subversive agency in these moments of anthropomorphizing leaves the primitive figures unfixed, engaging and responsive in ways that manifest in the early modern figure they encounter.

Notes

ⁱ See Mary Floyd-Wilson's "English Epicures and Scottish Witches." *Shakespeare Quarterly*. 57.2: 2006. 131-61.

ⁱⁱ See Lawrence Buell's, *The Future of Environmental Criticism*. Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2005. See also Lynne Bruckner and Dan Brayton's *Ecocritical Shakespeare*. Burlington: Ashgate, 2011. 57-69.

ⁱⁱⁱ See Gabriel Egan's *Green Shakespeare: From Ecopolitics to Ecocriticism*. New York: Routledge, 2006. See also Richard Kerridge's, "An Ecocritics Macbeth" *Ecocritical Shakespeare*. Ed. Lynne Bruckner & Dan Brayton. (2011). 193-210.

^{iv} All citations to *The Okavango Macbeth* refer to McCall Smith, Alexander. *The Okavango Macbeth*. Goodmusic Publishing: Edinburgh, 2011.

^v All citations to *Macbeth* refer to the 2006 Arden edition. Ed. Kenneth Muir

^{vi} See Hena and Richardson's "Primitivism" 2010.

^{vii} See Shankar Raman, *Renaissance Literature and Postcolonial Studies*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011. Print. Raman reference to the Spanish invasion of the Aztec empire indicates this dynamic

between the early modern European ideal and those perceived as primitive. He notes that, “because [Aztec oral and pictographic narratives] did not conform to the Renaissance ideal of alphabetic literacy,” the Aztecs were subjugated to colonial power since “to lack alphabetic writing was tantamount to lacking reason and thus to a failure to be human” (3).

^{viii} See Loomba, *Shakespeare, Race, and Colonialism*. New York: Oxford, 2002. Print.

^{ix} Valbuena writes that “In historical practice, according to the regnal principle known as *tanistry*, the incumbent king should nominate as his successor a member of the dominant collateral and competing royal line—and not his own son—as *tanist* (“the expected one”) to be ratified by vote of the high clansman” (83).

^x See Laertes: “Fear it, Ophelia, fear it, my dear sister, / and keep you in the rear of your affection” (*Ham* I.iii.33-34). See also Celia and Rosalind in Shakespeare’s *As You Like It*. Although they are cousins by blood, their relationship is described as “dearer than the natural bonds of sisters,” thus explaining their use of the word sister to describe one another throughout the play’s entirety (I.ii.238). Similarly, Henry employment of the term in Shakespeare’s *Henry V* reinforces his imposed kinship relations to Queen Isabella asking, “will you, fair sister, go with the princes or stay here with us?” while distancing the bequeathed Katherine as his cousin in his next line “yet leave our cousin Katherine here with us” (*H5* V.ii.92-93 & 97).

^{xi} For Reiss’ full account of passibility, see *Mirages of the Selfe: Patterns of Personhood in Ancient and Early Modern Europe*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2003. Here Reiss explains that “passibility names experiences of being whose common denominator was a sense of being *embedded in and acted on by* these circles—including the material world and immediate biological, familial, and social ambiances, as well as the soul’s (or “animate”) and cosmic, spiritual or divine life” (2).

^{xii} See Bhabha, “Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse.” *October*: 28, 1984. 128.

^{xiii} See Spiegel, *The Dreaded Comparison: Human and Animal Slavery*. London: Heretic Books, 1988. 37

^{xiv} See Fudge, *Brutal Reasoning: Animals, Rationality, and Humanity in Early Modern England*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006. 52.

^{xv} See Lewis McKinney. *Lamarck to Darwin: Contributions to Evolutionary Biology 1809-1859*. Lawrence: Coronado Press, 1971.

^{xvi} Although this scene’s festivity was likely added to Shakespeare’s Folio version of *Macbeth* by Thomas Middleton in the 1620’s, its significance as an early modern conception and dramatization of primitivism informs my discussion of *Macbeth* here regardless of the specific early modern playwright credited with the scene. For more on Middleton’s edits and additions see Jonathan Bate and Russell Jackson’s *Shakespeare: An Illustrated Stage History* (1996)

^{xvii} Here I discuss the Sisters’ beard as creating an encounter for Macbeth similar that which a human experiences when encountering a nonhuman primate. Although it is without the scope of this project, the female bearded figure, however, is relevant to a discussion of the Weird Sisters as Witch figure. For a reading of the bearded figure as Witch in relation to an opera see Daniel Albright, “The Witches and the Witch: Verdi’s *Macbeth*.” *Cambridge Opera Journal*. 17.3:2005. 225-252. See also Edward Bever, *The Realities of Witchcraft and Popular Magic in Early Modern Europe: Culture, Cognition, and Everyday Life*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008 and Lucien Levy-Bruhl, *Primitives and the Supernatural*. New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1935.

^{xviii} See James Rachels, *Created from Animals: The Moral Implications of Darwinism*. New York: Oxford UP, 1999.

^{xix} See Plotkin (1994).

^{xx} For more on the hierarchical distinction between the human and the animal see Simon Estok, *Ecocriticism and Shakespeare*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.

^{xxi} See Tillyard, E.M.W. *The Elizabethan World Picture*. Middlesex: Peregine, 1966.

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JAMIE PAIGE NEAL

RENAISSANCE / EARLY MODERN SCHOLAR

EDUCATION

Wake Forest University Winston-Salem, North Carolina <i>Master of Arts in English</i>	May 2012 <i>GPA: 3.723</i>
Wake Forest University Winston-Salem, North Carolina <i>Bachelor of Arts in Communication</i>	May 2010 <i>Cum Laude, GPA: 3.561</i>
Wake Forest Divinity School Cairo & Luxor, Egypt <i>Pilgrimage & Cultural Study</i>	Winter 2009
The Governor's School of North Carolina (West) Winston-Salem, North Carolina <i>Theater</i>	Summer 2005

EMPLOYMENT & EXPERIENCE

- | | |
|--------------------|---|
| May 2011-Present | The Governor's School Foundation of North Carolina
Foundation Board Member |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Successfully initiated, implemented, and continue to aid grassroots fundraising campaign to fund The Governor's School of North Carolina after state budget cuts eliminated funds for the 2012 session○ Appointed liaison with the Foundation Board President, Joseph Milner |
| May 2010 - Present | Z. Smith Reynolds Library, Wake Forest University
Winston-Salem, North Carolina
Reference Desk Staff |

-
- Assist students and library patrons with research needs
 - Complete independent projects including shifting shelves, weeding books, and binding periodicals

Summer 2009-2012 The Governor’s School of North Carolina (West)
 Salem College, Winston-Salem, North Carolina
**TAC Orientation Coordinator (TAC: Teaching Assistant /
 Counselor)**

- Work closely with the Director and Deans to familiarize new TACs with the procedures and policies of The Governor’s School
- Lead both new and returning TACs through Orientation Week, spearheading the creation of a well-prepared, united team prior to student arrival

Summer 2008 The Governor’s School of North Carolina (West)
 Salem College, Winston-Salem, North Carolina
Drama Teaching Assistant / Counselor

- Worked as Assistant Director to adapt the novel, *The Life of Pi* (Martell 2001), into a stage play for 16 students
- Facilitated community bonding and enforced school policies as a resident counselor

AWARDS & SCHOLARSHIPS

Summer 2011 Richter Scholarship
 Independent Travel and Research Scholarship
 London, England & Edinburgh, Scotland
 African Adaptations of Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*

Summer 2009 Wake Forest University Pro-Humanitate Mini-Grant
 International Service Learning
 Moshi, Mto Wa Mbu, & Maasailand, Tanzania
 Education & Medical Service Trip

2008-2010 Lambda Pi Eta, Communication Honors Society
 2009-2010 President, Lambda Pi Eta, Wake Forest University
 2010 Recipient of the WFU Communication Department Service
 Award

ACADEMIC CONFERENCES

March 2012 NeMLA Conference

Rochester, New York

Panel: Shakespeare at the Opera

Presentation: “*The Okavango Macbeth*: The Nature of ‘The Natural’
in a Baboon Opera”

November 2009

National Communication Association Convention

Panel: Juicy Ethics: A Symposium on ‘Juicy Campus’ and the
Ethics of Anonymous Blogging

Presentation: “The Tangled ‘Web’ We Weave: The Harsh Reality
of Virtual Reality”