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Matheny Period 6

Act II

Devil-Porter: The Door-Opening Service

In *Macbeth*, Shakespeare introduces the Porter into the third scene of Act II to provide comic relief and allude that hell is the equivalent of Macbeth's castle, adding to the dramatic irony and destruction of the Great Chain of Being. In Act II of *Macbeth*, the tension-filled air surrounds the audience and cast. Macbeth, flooded with guilt, has killed King Duncan due to his "vaulting ambition". Shakespeare—to diffuse the drama—brings about the Porter in Act II, Scene iii. In the depths of Macbeth's castle, a drunken Porter fumbles out lines on knocking that alludes Macbeth's castle to be hell, "Here's a knocking indeed! If a man were porter of hell gate, he should have old turning the key. Knock, knock, knock! Who's there, i' th' name of Beelzebub?" (II, iii, 1-3). Shakespeare creates the first lines of the Porter to represent that when the Porter opens doors, he is figuratively opening the gates of hell. Being drunk, the Porter claims that he is the gatekeeper of hell, and whoever knocks is asking for entrance to hell, or Macbeth's castle—where the King is killed. The Porter continues with his hellish allusion when he describes the temperature of the castle: "But this place is too cold for hell. . . I had thought to have let in some of all professions that go the primrose way to th' everlasting bonfire" (II, iii, 16-19). Shakespeare uses the Porter's words: "this place is too cold for hell" to imply that Macbeth's castle is worse than hell itself. Macbeth's actions of killing King Duncan disturbs the Great Chain of Being, in which God decided the places of all people in the social hierarchy.

Shakespeare implicitly writes of how Macbeth, a being of hell, has disrupted the creation of God which adds to the dramatic irony of how Macbeth, destroyer of the Great Chain of Being, is going to be crowned in Scone as King of Scotland. However, the Porter provides comic relief for the audience in the midst of dramatic irony and tension that travels through the scenes.

Shakespeare's jokes on sexual desire from the Porter induces in an ease and laughter from the audience: "Lechery, sir, it provokes and unprovokes. It provokes the desire, but it takes away the performance" (II, iii, 30-32). While the Porter speaks of Macbeth's castle being hell, Shakespeare also writes the Porter's lines to be sex jokes from his drunken state which causes "nose-painting, sleep, and urine" (II, iii, 29). Ultimately, the Porter in *Macbeth* alludes the Biblical references in the book and makes sex jokes to stir comic relief and drama among the audience.