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Analysis of *Macbeth*

Shakespeare is a famous play writer. As a skilled author, he was able to write many different types of plays. One of Shakespeare’s most famous plays was a tragedy entitled *Macbeth*. As well, Shakespeare often used many elements of his play to add to the underlying plot. In Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*, the motif of weather is used to emphasize the darkness of an action involved with the occurrence of the weather.

The first occurrence of weather happens with the introduction of the three witches. In act I scene i, the scene is set with lighting and thunder. The witches then enter and the first witch says, “When shall we meet again? / In thunder, lighting, or in rain?” (1-2). This scene is involved with weather in two ways. The first involvement is that the scene is preceded by both lighting and thunder and then the witches appear on stage. The second is that some of the very first words of the tragedy have to do with when the witches will meet. As well, this is where the association between the weather and the witches is made. This also means that a connection between the weather, specifically thunder, lighting and rain, can be associated with evil because the witches themselves are evil. The association that has been made between the weather and the presence of evil is used heavily though out the entirety of the tragedy; this is the reason why the association is made so early in the play. In other words, the link between weather and evil was established early in the play so that it can be referenced to later on in the play. As well, the relation made serves as an indicator of the witches presence. The witches, after all, said that they would meet each other again in this type of weather. In other words, when the witches would meet each other again, lightning, thunder, and rain would serve as an indicator of their presence; and the witches are present most likely to perform an evil act. The evil action would then be emphasized because of the presence of the weather. This causes the focus of the audience to be drawn to the evil act itself, thus it has accentuated the action, fulfilling the weather’s motif. Now that the association between weather and the presence of evil has been established, further examples can be analyzed.

The second occurrence of weather occurs following the death of King Duncan. In act II scene iv, the weather following the death of Duncan is described in the conversation between Ross and the Old Man as, “By th’ clock ‘tis day, / And yet dark night strangles the traveling lamp” (8-9). The Old Man replies by saying that this “Tis unnatural” (13). Once again, this statement is simply a description of the weather of the day after the death of Duncan. Now, the murder of the King was an evil act, and the weather following the murder was also dark. The presence of the gloomy weather indicates that an evil act has been performed, but the weather could also be explained as a mere coincidence. The comment made by the Old Man, who was a resident of this area for some time, said that this type of weather was unnatural. This would than mean that this weather must be associated with something else besides chance; specifically the murder of Duncan. In other words, because of the strangeness and darkness of the weather followed by the death on Duncan, it serves as an indicator of an act of evil. This would further accentuate the darkness of the act itself, thus emphasizing the act. In other words, the act of murder is evil, but it followed with a darkened day puts emphasis on how evil the act of murder really was. Following the murder of Duncan, Macbeth goes to talk to the witches.

The third occurrence of weather happens when the witches performed their apparitions. In act IV scene i, Macbeth goes to visit the witches. In this scene, the witches cast apparitions of different things; however, each apparition, in the scene descriptions, is preceded by the line,   
“*Thunder. First Apparition,*” “*Thunder. Second Apparition,*” or“*Thunder. Third Apparition.*” (76-99). In essence, before each apparition was shown, there was a loud band of thunder. As well, the apparition characters were quite gloomy: the first apparition was an armed head; the second a bloody child; the third a crowned child. Now, the apparitions were conjured up by the witches; agents of evil. As well, the apparitions’ messages were dark and evil themselves. Now, the darkness of the messages was emphasized by both the occurrence of the thunder and the fact that they were conjured up by the witches. In other words, the general messages and warnings told were accentuated because they were preceded by the thunder, used to capture the attention of the audience, and were conjured up by the witches, agents of evil. The two combined make this emphasizing effect stronger then it would be if either event was done alone. As well, the weather has been associated with the witches specifically because they say that they will meet in lighting, thunder or rain; thus the thunder mostly accentuates the witches. The witches, though, are the one’s associated with the evil. Thus the relationship between the weather and evil is syllogistic in nature. In other words, the weather is linked to the witches while the witches are associated with evil, thus weather is linked to evil through the witches. However, this association between the weather and the witches can be made more defined.

The fourth occurrence of weather is based on a threat given by the witches. The first witch was trying to get some nuts from a sailor’s wife, but the wife was unwilling to give them to her. For revenge, the first witch in act I scene iii says that she’ll “But in a sieve I’ll thither sail” (9), referring to the sailor’s boat. The other sisters than say “I’ll give thee a wind” (12) and “And I another” (14). In this example, the witches are referring to creating a stormy sea while the sailor is out in the water in hopes of creating disaster for the sailor. Now, before this the relationship between the witches and the weather was that the weather only indicated their presence, and by implication evil, but this example shows that the affiliation between the two is more than just a correlation. The relationship becomes a cause and effect rather than a correlative. In other words, since the witches can control the weather itself, the relationship between the two becomes more direct. That is to say that the witches’ actions are sometimes the direct cause of the darkened weather. This also means that the relationship between the weather and evil is also stronger because they are both directly related to the witches. Furthermore, the relationship between the two is still syllogistic, just stronger because their individual relations with the witches are more direct.

In conclusion, the motif of weather in Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* is used to accentuate the darkness of the actions that are involved with the occurrence of weather. Some examples of this includes the introduction of the witches, the unusual weather followed by Duncan’s death, the thunder preceding each apparition, and the dialogue of the witches referring to having the power to create a stormy sea. As well, the relationship between the weather and evil is syllogistic with the witches being their common element.