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The Paranormal Events of *Macbeth*

Through the eerie settings of Scotland in the fictional novel, *Macbeth*, you find a large variety of characters and conflicts. One of the more magnified characters, Macbeth navigates the struggles of being a husband, hopeful king-in-waiting, and a man caught between his conscience and strong ambitions. In this fictional Shakesperean novel, it explores the struggles of life in the 11th century; which dives into the timeless themes of morality, power, and the supernatural. Macbeth wrestles between his internal and external conflicts, ultimately finding himself in difficult situations which cause him the feelings of guilt and paranoia spiraling into his eventual downfall. In *Macbeth*, the paranormal forces—portrayed by the apparitions, Witches, and Banquo’s ghost— appear to shape Macbeth’s fate and highlight the struggle between choice and destiny.

Throughout *Macbeth* paranormal forces play an immense role in the development and plot as well as the shaping of the characters. One of the focal reasons for the paranormal event in *Macbeth* are the Witches, with their cryptic prophecies, which kindle Macbeth’s ambition, and lead him on a dark path of treachery and betrayal. One of the supernatural events that took place in Macbeth— the visions; introduced by the Witches, one of the first visions being a floating armed head, the next a bloody child, and the third a child with a broom. Each of these visions has a further elucidation— the floating armed head warns Macbeth of Macduff, the bloody child

informs Macbeth that no man born by woman can harm him, and finally the child with a broom predicts Birnam Wood moving onto Dunsinane. The witches then say “Be bloody, bold, and resolute. Laugh to scorn The power of man, for none of woman born Shall harm Macbeth.” (Shakespeare 4.1.87-89). This quote from the second apparition explains that Macbeth cannot be harmed by anyone born by woman, creating false hope. These apparitions fuel Macbeth’s paranoia and thirst for power. After Macbeth's brutal murders of King Duncan and his son Banquo, he finds himself haunted by their spirits. While celebrating Macbeth's banquet in honor of his heir to the throne, Banquo’s ghost appears. Macbeth is quickly frightened and scared, Lady Macbeth covers for him as he leaves the room. Macbeth terrified says this line:

Avaunt and quit my sight; let the earth hide thee.

Thy bones are marrowless, thy blood is cold,

Thou hast no speculation in those eyes

Which thou dost glare with. (Shakespeare 3.4.97-100a).

This shows how Macbeth sits in terror of just seeing Banquo’s ghost. Throughout these events it shows how Macbeth seems to become more paranoid as the events build up and as his thirst for power increases.

Macbeth makes many decisions throughout the course of this story, many fueled by the input of Lady Macbeth; these choices lead to their ultimate demise. In the start of the narrative, Lady Macbeth is Macbeth's biggest encouragement to commit immoral actions like the murder of King Duncan. Lady Macbeth pushes Macbeth to go through with the murder of King Duncan when she challenges his manhood by saying:

What beast was't, then,

That made you break this enterprise to me?

When you durst do it, then you were a man;
And, to be more than what you were, you would
Be so much more the man. (Shakespeare 1.7.47b-51).

Lady Macbeth says this almost in a sense to pick on Macbeth. As Macbeth is threatened by Banquo to keep his position as king, Lady Macbeth urges him to “handle it and be a man”. She may not persuade him as she did to kill Duncan, but definitely is an influence on Macbeth to handle Banquo and his threat to the throne. She does this by saying:

Nought's had, all's spent,
Where our desire is got without content.
'Tis safer to be that which we destroy,
Than by destruction dwell in doubtful joy. (Shakespeare 3.2.5-8).

She may not have directly said to murder Duncan but placed emphasis on what could happen if Macbeth did not deal with the situation. Macbeth took this and ran with it as his ambition overrides his confidence. Throughout these decisions and more you can see how Lady Macbeth encourages Macbeth to overstep his morals; this leads to increasing guilt and paranoia.

Lady Macbeth and Macbeth are faced with many decisions, most of which trample their values and lead to their pending destruction. In the beginning you find that Macbeth has a fine line between right and wrong; even though at times, he will cross that line he still feels the guilt for the actions he committed. When considering the murder of King Duncan for the throne Macbeth says:

I am his kinsman and his subject,
Strong both against the deed; then, as his host,
Who should against his murderer shut the door,

Not bear the knife myself. (Shakespeare 1.7.13-16).

Macbeth says this because he is considered Duncan's friend and almost like family, therefore he should not murder him. As he yearns for power, Macbeth rationalizes the murder with the help of his wife—Lady Macbeth. Macbeth's fatal weakness is committing actions fueled by his ambitions rather than being loyal to his morals. In Act 5 Macbeth says:

To kiss the ground before young Malcolm's feet,

And to be baited with the rabble's curse.

Though Birnam wood be come to Dunsinane,

And thou, opposed, being of no woman born,

Yet I will try the last. Before my body

I throw my warlike shield. Lay on, Macduff,

And damned be him that first cries, 'Hold, enough.' (Shakespeare 5.7.57b-64).

This shows even though he may be scared or he knows his days are coming to an end he refuses to back down. By the end of the story Macbeth had committed numerous murders, including Banquo, Duncan, and others; all because of his drive for power.

This story is a great example of how important it is to follow your morals and not cross them for anyone; this is what led to Macbeth and Lady Macbeth's downfall. The supernatural events in this story created a false hope, leading to a vast amount of poor decisions and paranoia. Macbeth's need for authority destroyed him, the supernatural events which instigated him leaving his ethical boundaries. The role Lady Macbeth played sealed their tragic fate.

Works Cited

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