

Essay on Macbeth and Lady Macbeth

Dawn

Tuesday, the 16th of March 2021

Macbeth as Tormented - 15/03/2021

1 Do Now:

1. How does Shakespeare present the fear of the supernatural in Macbeth?
 - The playwright, William Shakespeare presents the fear of the supernatural through: nature being undone, the chanting and activities of the three weird sisters and the diabolical and unnatural thoughts and actions of the Macbeth couple.
2. Complete the quotation: "False face must hide what the...".
 - "False face must hide what the false heart doth know".
3. Complete the quotation: "Come, thick night, And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell, That my...".
 - "Come, thick night and pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell that my keen knife see not the wound it makes nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark, To cry 'Hold, hold!'".
4. What arguments and methods are used by Lady Macbeth to try to restore Macbeth to normality?
 - Lady Macbeth attempts to rationally reason with her husband, she implores him to quit worrying, dismissing the heinous act of regicide she says, "what's done is done".
5. What does Macbeth mean when he says, "It will have blood they say: blood will have blood.".
 - Macbeth is implying that his guilt cannot be erased, instead to cover his guilt he must kill more people to hide his secret.
6. Why does Shakespeare use the word '*night*' so often in the play?
 - Night is used as a motif by Shakespeare, darkness is used to cover up the diabolical acts of the Macbeth couple, providing an element of mystery and deception.

2 What are the moments in the play when we see Macbeth tormented?

1. The beginning
 - Tormented by the prophecies of the witches -
 - LM challenges his manhood - to commit regicide for the crown
 - Mac tormented by the murder of KD
2. The middle
 - Tormented by the ghost of Banquo
 - When Mac learns that Fleance has escaped / lack of sleep
3. The end

- Mac is tormented when he sees the long line of kings with Banquo at the end of the line
- Mac is tormented when he realises that the equivocations from the witches were misleading and manipulating him to his destruction

3 How does Shakespeare present Macbeth's state of mind in the following extract from Act 5 Scene 3? and then part (b)

Introduction

William Shakespeare tackles the taboo topic of regicide through the proxy Macbeth. Shakespeare provides the Jacobean audience an insight into Macbeth's state of mind, allowing them to explore the theme of torment, and demonstrates the psychological effects and mental anguish that lingers on after an act so atrocious such as regicide is committed, by Macbeth. Having just survived the gunpowder plot, a foiled and cowardice assassination attempt in the eyes of a Jacobean audience, Shakespeare writes Macbeth with King James I in mind. Moreover, animosity and dissidence between the predominantly Protestant majority, at the time, and the Catholic minority was at an all-time high, further increasing tensions regarding the King's welfare and threats to the crown. Given this, Shakespeare purposefully depicts the severe ramifications of Macbeth's treachery towards King Duncan, whom the audience would have held in equal high regard to King James I, to leave the audience to deter the audience from committing regicide and more importantly reflect on themselves - to truly comprehend the consequences of killing the king.

Paragraph 1

In the extract, Macbeth's state of mind is depicted through his monologue, where he appears distressed. Act 5 Scene 3 is a pivotal moment in the play, the army is fast approaching Macbeth's castle and Macbeth exclaims, "Seyton!—I am sick at heart, When I behold—Seyton, I say!—". The plethora of different punctuation, encapsulates his hesitant and anxious state - Macbeth can no longer form coherent sentences illustrating to the Jacobean audience Macbeth is deeply troubled by the rapidly approaching army. This is further elucidated, by the use of the "!", which encapsulates the tension and pent-up frustration in Macbeth's mind. The noun "heart" has connotations of compassion and life-giving. Yet, Shakespeare couples the noun with the adjective "sick" which has historical connotations of "disease", Shakespeare appears to be implying that the root cause of Macbeth's torment is his heart, illustrating Macbeth as a wicked character at heart. Macbeth's admittance of being "sick at heart", would have disgusted the Jacobean audience, as it was expected for a King to have a pure heart. Moreover, for Macbeth to be sick at heart would have evoked a prequel in the Jacobean audience as this would imply, that the King selected by God was not adequate for the job, as the divine right of Kings was an affirmed belief, which would have been seen as against Christianity. Alternatively, the quote evokes pathos for Macbeth from the audience, just as the heart pumps blood to the rest of the body, Macbeth's mental anguish is spreading throughout him. Moreover, The declarative sentence could imply that Macbeth is heartbroken, as Lady Macbeth had been hospitalised and his defeat appears to be imminent,

Equally disquieting, Macbeth's distressing and yet also distraught nature is further perpetuated earlier in Act 2 Scene 2. Macbeth, having just committed the heinous act of regicide exclaims, "But wherefore could I not pronounce 'Amen'?" The sensory verb, "pronounce" illustrates to the Jacobean audience the sheer magnitude of the crime Macbeth has just committed, physically Macbeth's mouth cannot utter the holy words "amen", further casting Macbeth from God. Moreover, Macbeth's inability to "pronounce amen" serves as a stern reminder to the Jacobean audience and yet also pleases Shakespeare's theatre companies biggest patron King James I. Shakespeare's usage of religious vocabulary amplifies the extent to how atrocious Macbeth's actions were, demonstrating to the audience Macbeth did not just commit a crime against the throne but a crime against God as well and an enemy of God. This would astound and frighten the audience as God was held in high regard during the 17th century. Furthermore, Macbeth also murders the chamberlains of King Duncan in cold blood and his mind is haunted with the guilt that ensues. Macbeth proclaims that they had seen him with "these hangman's hands". The disturbing imagery of a hangman's hands, would have horrified the Jacobean audience, they would have associated this with strangulation and disembowelment; as contextually the Elizabethan hangman's role was to not only hang the condemned but to also draw and quarter them. Alternatively, the vivid image of Macbeth's hands to be covered in blood, not only encapsulates Macbeth's distraught mind but also represents the immense guilt felt from committing regicide.

Paragraph 2

Macbeth's state of mind is also portrayed to be nihilistic and melancholic, Macbeth muses at his own defeats and struggles to keep his dismal spirits up. Macbeth exclaims, "this push will cheer me ever or disseat me now". Macbeth, is aware this battle may cement his reign forever or lead to his death, evoking a feeling of dread in the audience, as they are made witness to the grim reality that awaits Macbeth. Macbeth then proclaims, "I have lived long enough". The declarative sentence, creates a sudden abrupt tone, encapsulating Macbeth's pessimism towards the situation. The adjectives "long" coupled with "enough" and antithetic parallelism, illustrate to the audience Macbeth is tired of living further, precisely capturing Macbeth's nihilistic approach towards life. For Macbeth, life has started to lose its meaning and he feels as if his life is beginning to wither like a yellow leaf in Autumn. Macbeth exclaims, "My way of life is fallen into the sere, the yellow leaf." The verb "fallen", encapsulates the dire situation Macbeth finds himself in, yet also highlights to the Jacobean audience Macbeth's fall from grace. This is further elucidated in the noun phrase "my way of life", which possible serves as a reminder to the Jacobean audience, people such as Macbeth who commit heinous acts such as regicide have no role in society and will fall into obscurity. Shakespeare then uses the extended metaphor and autumnal imagery of a "yellow leaf", to address Macbeth's current situation. Macbeth, realises his way of living is no longer sustainable and will dry up - like the yellowing of an autumn leave, this precisely captures the nihilistic approach Macbeth starts to develop towards life. This is further accentuated when Macbeth exclaims, "which should accompany old age". The modal verb "should" further exemplifies Macbeth's self-awareness of the severity of the situation. The verb "accompany", has a gentle and melancholic undertone Macbeth is no longer able to enjoy the virtues of old age "which should" be with him, encapsulating Macbeth's somberness and further amplifying Macbeth's nihilistic approach to life. The listing of abstract nouns, create a semantic field of reminiscence and evoke a depressing mood in the audience, yet also encompasses the harsh reality Macbeth must find himself in, due to committing the abominable act of regicide. Macbeth, finds himself losing the will to live, for him life has lost all meaning and there is nothing to look forward to, further insinuating the melancholic tone the passage has. Macbeth's thoughts indicate he is losing the will-power to continue living.

Whereas earlier in the play, Macbeth exhibits perseverance and an incredible amount of will-power to survive the battle against the Norwegian army. When King Duncan is informed that the battle between the Scottish and Norwegian armies had been won in Scotland's favour. Macbeth's name is repeated on numerous occasions by being mentioned for his bravery and chivalrous attributes that he had exhibited fearlessly in battle. The captain exclaims, "As two spent swimmers that do cling together and choke their art". The adjective "spent" coupled with the verbs "cling" and "choke" create a semantic field of exhaustion, this further exemplifies Macbeth's bravery and will-power as even when he is fatigued and has a higher risk of dying to the enemy, he still fights to the very end in order to protect King Duncan and Scotland. The verb "cling" illustrates to the audience Macbeth is unwilling to lose sight of his enemy; this further insinuates the notion that Macbeth is determined and hardheaded.

Paragraph 3

Finally Shakespeare portrays Macbeth's state of mind as fearless and unphased. Macbeth exclaims, "I'll fight till from my bones my flesh be hacked.". Macbeth viewing life as meaningless, still adheres to his soldier's creed, the use of the preposition "till" encapsulates Macbeth's will-power and unphased attitude, as he chooses to fight to the fight even though the odds are stacked against him. The verb "fight" further intensifies Macbeth's warrior spirit, inferring that Macbeth may have lost his: friends, honour and love yet he is still a warrior at heart. The nouns "bones" has connotations of death, while the noun "flesh" has connotations of living, both coupled illustrate the immense physical pain Macbeth is about to endure. After committing the heinous act of regicide, Macbeth becomes starts to realise the insignificance of life, realising his life is meaningless he welcomes death

inflict pain pathos
consistency as a soldier

Lady Macbeth as Villainous - 16/03/21

4 Do Now

1. Give textual examples of some of the themes we have encountered so far in the play.
 - Violence

- Supernatural
- Deceit/Appearance Reality
- Power
- Guilt

2. Give three reasons why a Jacobean audience would have been frightful of Lady Macbeth.

5 How is LM's character a subversion of a Jacobean woman?

6 Why is LM a Machiavellian? List your reasons with specific textual examples.

7 Model Paragraph

LM is seen as a Machiavellian here as she not asks. But even demands that the spirits remove her gender and with that, her femininity, so that she may be able to persuade Macbeth to kill KD. The disturbing imagery of a woman addressing the dark forces would have horrified the Jacobean audience who would have associated this with witchcraft and the supernatural - both of which were seen as evil and against Christianity. Shakespeare appears to be consciously linking LM and the witches in the Jacobean conscience, manipulating us to not only fear her but also see her as an equally disruptive force in Macbeth's life as the witches. Equally disquieting, LM's villainous nature is heightened when she says, "Come to my woman's breast and take my milk for gall..."

8 Starting with this extract (Act 1 Scene7), explain how far you think Shakespeare presents Lady Macbeth as a villainous character

Introduction

IN the didactic and tragic play the playwright, William Shakespeare tackles the taboo topics of regicide and subverting the great chain of being through the proxy, Lady Macbeth. Shakespeare, provides the Jacobean audience an insight into the character Lady Macbeth's state of mind, who is painted as a villain, illustrating layers of utter devotion towards her husband alongside overwhelming resentment and remorselessness. Having just survived the gunpowder plot, a foiled and cowardly assassination attempt in the eyes of the Jacobean audience, Shakespeare wrote Macbeth with King James I in mind. Moreover, animosity and dissidence between the predominantly Protestant majority and Catholic minority was at an all time high, further increasing tensions regarding the King's welfare and threats to the crown. Given this, Shakespeare purposefully depicts the severe ramifications and psychological torment Lady Macbeth endures, before her untimely ending, to serve as a stern reminder to the audience - to deter the thought of regicide and subverting the great chain of being.

Paragraph 1

Act 1 Scene 7 is a pivotal moment in the play Lady Macbeth is portrayed as villain through the disrespectful, unsympathetic and manipulative characteristics she exhibits. Macbeth is having doubts about committing the heinous act of regicide, knowing the magnitude of the crime Lady Macbeth spurs her husband to murder King Duncan. Lady Macbeth exclaims, "Was the hope drunk Wherein you dress'd yourself? hath it slept since? And wakes it now, to look so green and pale At what it did so freely?". The repeated repetition of rhetorical questions, encapsulates Lady Macbeth's as impatient and frantic, yet would also evoke a prequel from the Jacobean audience. Contextually, the great chain of being dictated that men had more authority than women, therefore should be treated with high regard - yet to the audiences dismay Lady Macbeth undermines her husband's authority through the bombardment of spiteful question. This is further elucidated through the adjectives "green" and "pale". The colour, "green" has connotations of sickness and nausea, yet "pale" has connotations of being frightened. The coupling of adjectives has a sinister mocking undertone, she dismisses her husbands complaints and intuition on committing regicide, mocking him as he cannot stomach the act of killing his King and is petrified at the mere thought, encapsulating her harshness, illustrating her as apathetic. Lady Macbeth then proclaims, "Such I account thy love". The abstract noun "love" has traditional connotations of compassion and

overwhelming affection, yet Lady Macbeth uses the noun to emotionally blackmail her husband, encapsulating her manipulative nature and further reinforcing the disgust the audience has towards her, as she attempts to mask her deceitful nature under the pretence of love - a valued and respected Christian teaching. Lady Macbeth then proceeds to further emasculate her husband when she proclaims, "Art thou afeard". The adjective "afeard" would evoke an uproar in the Jacobean audience, as Lady Macbeth questions Macbeth's masculinity - which all esteemed men held on to dearly. Contextually, Jacobean men that showed fear to their wife would have been shunned in society, for Lady Macbeth to be so brazen about it implies that in their marriage the power dynamics are imbalanced and she is more dominant than Macbeth.

Similarly earlier in the play, Lady Macbeth's dominance over her husband is perpetuated in Act 1 Scene 5. The notion the couple's power dynamics are imbalances is exemplified when Lady Macbeth proclaims, "Under my battlements". The preposition "under" coupled with the personal pronoun "my" encapsulates Lady Macbeth's domineering nature, yet also illustrates to the audience Lady Macbeth is bold exerting her power over her husband by claiming possession of a military stronghold. Contextually, in the Jacobean era the notion that woman were to fight in war, or to even be involved in non-domestic roles, would have been seen as preposterous and would count towards subverting the great chain of being, further increasing the audience's disdain towards Lady Macbeth. Alternatively, the possessive pronoun indicates Lady Macbeth's hunger for power, further depicting her as a villain, as she wishes to cease control of a "battlement" which is capable of inflicting immense pain upon her enemies.

Paragraph 2

Lady Macbeth is portrayed as a villain as she torments and insults Macbeth yet also acting as defiant and dominant, in order to coerce him into committing the act of regicide. After being continuously belittled by his wife, Macbeth wishes to cling on to his masculinity exuding it and embracing his gender role. Macbeth responds with, "we will proceed no further in this business.". The negation no, precisely indicates his definitive attitude. Contextually, the Jacobean husband had the final say in all marital-affairs, yet to the audience's disgust Lady Macbeth refuses to back down further emasculating and dominating her husband. She states, "when you durst do it, then you were a man". The verb "durst" encapsulates Lady Macbeth's defiant attitude and yet also highlights her daring behaviour; implying there is toxicity in the couples relationship. Lady Macbeth's unsympathetic display of power, would evoke a feeling of dread and uneasiness in both a contemporary and Jacobean audience, as her outright proposal to murder the King would be frowned upon in both time periods.

Similarly earlier in the play, Lady Macbeth is portrayed as a villain through her conspiring with the supernatural, calling upon them to defeminize her and strip her of all human qualities. Lady Macbeth exclaims, "Come, you spirits that tend on mortal thoughts". The use of the imperative verb "come" encapsulates her commanding nature. Yet, "come" also has a sinister undertone which would have evoked awe and dread in the Jacobean audience, as there was mass hysteria over the supernatural, yet Lady Macbeth's dominant nature is further exemplified through this. Lady Macbeth, wishes for the spirits to "unsex her" and to fill her from "the crown" to the "toe top-full of direst cruelty". The imperative verb "unsex" further amplifies her commanding nature, yet also would evoke disgust and disdain towards Lady Macbeth from the audience. Contextually, during the period in which Macbeth was written, there was a rigid social hierarchy that had strict expectations on the roles of woman, yet Lady Macbeth deliberately wishes to be stripped of feminine qualities in order to exercise her power. The noun "crown" encapsulates Lady Macbeth's desire for power. Moreover, the adjective "toe top-full" precisely captures Lady Macbeth as a megalomaniac. The adjective "direst" coupled with "cruelty", encapsulate her apathetic attitude, yet also would evoke a prequel in the audience, as contextually women were expected to be caring and compassionate, whereas Lady Macbeth embodies the direct opposite of the female Jacobean virtues, that were held in high regard. Lady Macbeth then exclaims, "Come to my woman's breasts, and take my milk for gall." Shakespeare uses the noun's "breasts" and "milk" to represent Lady Macbeth's womanhood. The adjectives have connotations of nourishment and childhood, yet Lady Macbeth wishes to have her milk replaced with gall, a vile poison. The noun "gall" serves to portray Lady Macbeth as a villain, as it illustrates to the Jacobean audience the toxicity within Lady Macbeth further exemplifying her cruel attitude. Lady Macbeth is seen as a Machiavellian character here, she demands the spirits remove her gender so she is able to coerce her husband into committing the heinous act of regicide. Historically when Macbeth was being written witchcraft was a controversial topic, where accusations of being a witch or calling upon spirits were taken incredibly seriously. Evidence of collaborating or conspiring with evil spirits, was enough to condemn a suspect to death by: drowning, burning at the stake or hanging. Shakespeare, appears to be consciously linking Lady Macbeth and the supernatural, evoking fear in the audience and hatred towards her, yet also to encourage the women in the audience to distance themselves from the supernatural and to hold on to their feminine values

dearly. King Duncan, was actively interested in documenting and warning against the supernatural, writing a book called *Demonologies*, Shakespeare, to further gain the King's approval, mentions the supernatural to affirm the statements made by the King in his book, working to please him as he was a large source of revenue for his play company.

Paragraph 3

Finally, Lady Macbeth is portrayed as a villain by Shakespeare through her twisted perception of morals and her ruthless attitude towards motherhood and reality. Lady Macbeth exclaims, "I have given suck, and know how tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me". The verb *given*, evokes a sense of ambiguity and mysteriousness towards the Jacobean and contemporary audience, as it is unbeknownst to us whether or not Lady Macbeth was childless or was a mother. If the latter is to believe, her next lines would be horrifying to the audience. She proclaims, 'I would, while it was smiling in my face, Have pluck'd my nipple from his boneless gums, And dash'd the brains out.'" The adjective *boneless* encapsulates the infant's innocence and frailness, in contrast to Lady Macbeth who is depicted as malicious. The verb "*dash'd*" encapsulates Lady Macbeth's violent and ruthless nature. This is further insinuated through the noun, "*brain*", which would evoke a vivid graphic image, evoking extreme hatred towards Lady Macbeth, as babies were seen to be pure in the eyes of a Jacobean audience. Lady Macbeth, claims she would kill her own child in cold-blood, encapsulating her warped sense of reality, if she had "*sworn so*". The verb phrase, highlights to the Jacobean audience her complete disregard towards her own child's life. However, it can also be argued that her ruthlessness is simply a false pretence in order to seem powerful.

Lady Macbeth, actions appear to indicate her blood-lust and malevolence. Whereas later in the play in Lady Macbeth appears to be detached from reality and hysterical. In Act 5, Lady Macbeth exclaims, "Out damned spot - Out I say". The interjection "*out*" encapsulates her heart-brokenness, moreover the repetition of *out* illustrates to the audience the hysterical nature of her outbursts, while sleepwalking. Contextually, a Jacobean audience would see this as a direct punishment from God for Lady Macbeth to subvert the great chain of being and to spur her husband to commit the murder of regicide. This is in stark contrast, towards herself in Act 2, where she claims, "A little water clears us of this deed". The adjective "*little*" encapsulates Lady Macbeth's dismissive attitude, yet also foreshadows her naivety towards the audience. The verb "*clear*" coupled with the noun "*deed*" are an implicit parallel to the biblical story of Pontius Pilate, who washed his hands after sentencing Jesus to crucifixion, absolving himself from the guilt in doing so. Given this, Lady Macbeth hopes by emulating the symbolic act of purification she will be wiped of guilt,

Conclusion

To conclude, Shakespeare portrays Lady Macbeth as a villain not only in the extract but throughout the entirety of the play, her objective in the monologue was to relentlessly and immaturely belittle her husband until he relented to her desires. However, in doing so Lady Macbeth loses touch Lady Macbeth's objective in her monologue is to relentlessly and immaturely tear him apart until he relents to her will. Overall, Lady Macbeth is successful in her attempts to get her husband to follow her plan through utilizing figurative language and rhetorical appeals, and ultimately murders Duncan. However, the way she went about her arguments proved she wanted the throne because she is petty and sees Macbeth as her ticket to being queen. This is obvious in the way she uses such demeaning vocabulary to oblige him to prove her wrong by acting the opposite of how she claims he is. This powerful speech from Macbeth effectively showcases major flaws Lady Macbeth's character, and certainly makes for a riveting tale.