

My essay...

Dawn

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In the didactic and tragic play, Shakespeare portrays bravery as a noble and desirable characteristic through the characters of Macbeth and Macduff, yet also shows how Lady Macbeth is lacklustre in bravery. The playwright, William Shakespeare wrote the play in 1606, when animosity and dissidence between the Protestant majority and Catholic minority was at an all time high. Having just survived the gunpowder plot, a foiled and cowardly attempt to reinstate a Catholic monarch in the eyes of a Jacobean audience, Shakespeare wrote the play with King James I in mind. Moreover, in 1606 when Macbeth was written bravery was a desirable, honourable and nobleistic trait that all esteemed men wished to possess in order to be seen as masculine by Jacobean society.

In this extract, bravery is portrayed through Macbeth's refusal to surrender to Macduff in their final battle. Act 5 Scene 7 is a pivotal moment in the play; Macbeth appears overzealous to fight Macduff as he has put too much of his faith in the witches' prophecies. Macbeth exclaims, "I bear a charmed life, which must not yield to one of woman born". The adjective "charmed" is euphemistic and accentuates Macbeth's confidence. The adjective "charmed" would have evoked a sense of aversion in the audience towards Macbeth. Macbeth's initial surge of bravery and overconfidence is due to him holding on to the notion that he was being guarded by the witches prophetic statements. Whereas, in the Jacobean era bravery was regarded to have come from a man's own self-determination and strong-willed spirit not from the words of witches. The modal verb "must" paired with the conjunction "not" encapsulates how Macbeth is adamant in not losing the battle. Further, illustrating his bravery to the audience. The derogatory and degrading pronoun "one", illustrates to the audience Macbeth chooses to mock his opponent even while engaged in a fierce battle. By omitting the appropriate honorific for "Lord Macduff" the "Thane of Fife". Shakespeare exemplifies Macbeth's unphased attitude and his control of the battle, this would have evoked anticipation in the audience as Macbeth appears too self-assured. After Macduff reveals to Macbeth he was born of a caesarean section, Macbeth to the audience's surprise still holds steadfast to the initial bravery he exhibits at the start of the battle. This would earn Macbeth a tremendous amount of respect in the eyes of the Jacobean audience. Contextually, in the 17th century men who fought to the death were believed to die a noble death. Macbeth's resilience was expected of men in the Jacobean era which would further earn him applause from the Jacobean crowd. Macbeth, declares "Accursed be that tongue that tells me so, for it hath cow'd my better part of man.!" The verb "accursed" shows Macbeth's defiant nature as he insults Macduff wishing for him to be under a literal curse. Macbeth's defiance further insinuates his determination to not surrender. Shakespeare uses the technique of inversion by changing the syntax of the sentence. Shakespeare reveals to the Jacobean audience how Macbeth is distressed but still is bold in battle. The verb "cow'd", meaning to be scared of threats, further exemplifies Macbeth's bravery and unphased attitude. Macbeth refuses to be intimidated by Macduff, he refuses to be branded as a coward and yield. The use of the "!" paired with the noun "man" encapsulates Macbeth's stout-heartedness. This also reinforces the stereotypical Jacobean belief that as he is a male being labelled as cowardice would diminish his reputation and undermine him. Moreover, this further strengthens the audience's approval for Macbeth as he matches the criteria of a brave Jacobean man. Similarly, Macbeth's bravery is further perpetuated earlier in Act 1 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 chivalrousness 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. The use of a cyclical structure by Shakespeare, shows that bravery is earned by hard work and determination and although Macbeth was lured into a false sense of security by the witches, his bravery permeates throughout the play. Shakespeare does this to show the longevity of bravery encouraging the audience to be more brave themselves as it would appear even more alluring to them. As a result of Macbeth’s bravery, King Duncan awards Macbeth with the title “Thane of Cawdor.” King James the first, the current ruling monarch, was a patron of Shakespeare’s theatre company, therefore a large source of revenue for Shakespeare and his actors. Macbeth was written when there was growing speculation of a potential Catholic uprising. Shakespeare pleases King James by presenting bravery as a noble and chivalrous characteristic, this would encourage the men in the Jacobean audience to grow protective of the King so much so they would risk their life for his safety.

¶ In the extract Macduff’s bravery is highlighted through him risking his life and honour to battle King Macbeth. Macduff exclaims “yield thee coward”. The exclamatory sentence exemplifies Macduff’s domineering nature and highlights his reassurance, the derogatory adjective “coward” revealed to the audience Macduff is also fearless as he curses at Macbeth despite being in a heated battle. To be addressed as a coward rather than by a title or honorific would have caused great commotion within the audience, society dictated men should be protective of their reputation and for Macbeth to be called a coward accentuates Macduff’s certainty that he will win the battle as he causes great offense by using the adjective. Macduff’s bravery is further perpetuated when he proclaims, “We’ll have thee, as our rarer monsters are,”. The noun “monster” reveals to the audience that Macduff considers Macbeth a threat yet he is unscathed, further encapsulating his bravery and valour. This is further exemplified in “Painted on a pole, and underwrit, “Here may you see the tyrant.””. The verbs “painted” paired with “underwrit” has a mocking undertone and further exemplifies the notion that Macduff is unphased to battle a mighty warrior such as Macbeth. Macduff wishes for Macbeth’s carcass to be publicly displayed. The use of quotation marks in “Here you may see the tyrant” also reinforces Macduff’s boldness and it also has religious connotations surrounding it. The majority Christian audience would have been very familiar with the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, after which the Romans declared “Here you may see the King of the Jews”. Macduff mocks Macbeth as being the unrightful King and wishes to kill him to restore the rightful heir to the throne Malcolm. This would have evoked hope and approval towards Macduff, in the Jacobean era the King was viewed as a honourable and worthy man appointed by none other than God, Macbeth committing the act of regicide would have infuriated the audience, however Macduff announcing he will kill Macbeth and therefore avenging the King would have made the audience appreciate his efforts. Similarly to Macbeth, Macduff also adheres strictly to his bravery and also fights courageously. However, in contrast to act 5 scene 7 the audience are given an insight into Macduff’s internal struggle and mental anguish when he comes upon the body of the slain King Duncan. Macduff appears hysterical and distraught when he proclaims “O horror, horror, horror!” the repetition of horror encapsulates his fearfulness and evokes a sense of uneasiness in the audience. The interjection “O” emphasises his heartbroken nature and yet also encapsulates the femininity of Macduff. Contextually, in the Jacobean era, men were expected to disregard emotions such as fear and sadness and only exhibit emotions such as anger or jealousy, whereas women were allowed to reveal their frightful and melancholic sides. Furthermore, when Macduff exclaims, “Most sacrilegious murder hath broke ope The Lord’s anointed temple, and stole thence”. The superlative adverb “most” illustrates to the audience that he cannot contain his shock. This would have evoked a sense of disgust in the audience, as men in the Jacobean era were expected to be calm and collected. However, Macduff’s use of biblical vocabulary such as the adjective “sacrilegious” and “anointed” coupled with the title “Lord” create a semantic field of awe and respect. Shakespeare presents bravery as being paramount to all other emotions but also highlights to the audience that there are also many other underlying emotions. Macduff momentarily detaches himself from reality after seeing such “horror” ; this would have evoked pathos in a 21st audience as they would be more understanding of psychological trauma. Macduff’s use of biblical vocabulary reinforces the concept of the divine right of Kings further pleasing King James I. The adjective “sacrilegious”,

meaning a sacred person has been violated, encapsulates his chivalrous nature as he holds the King to such a high regard and respects his position in society.

¶ In the extract Macbeth's bravery is captured through his decision to fight till the death, Macbeth's castle would have been surrounded by the enemy's army and fighting any longer would have been futile. Macbeth could have averted a painful death from Macduff's sword by pleading to be hanged yet he adamantly chooses to battle Macduff. Macbeth chooses not to "yield and kiss the ground and young Malcolm's feet" The constant repetition of the verb "yield" reinforces Macbeth's determination and resilience throughout the entire play. This would have been greatly admired by the Jacobean audience as Macbeth chooses to die the more honourable way. In, "And damned be him that first cries, "Hold, enough!". Shakespeare uses euphemism, Macbeth challenges Macduff playfully this encapsulates his fearlessness as he isn't afraid of the outcome. The adjective "damned" reinforces the Jacobean concept that men should be ashamed if they admit defeat. The verb "cries" would have caused an uproar in the audience, as for a man to cry in battle would have been of great shame. Moreover the declarative and cyclical sentence "Hold enough" is reminiscent of the beginning of the play where Macbeth was celebrated for "clinging to the enemy" and "choking their art". Shakespeare encapsulates Macbeth's warrior spirit and valour as he chooses to not surrender no matter how gruesome his death may be showing how Macbeth has a warrior mentality even when he is in his castle. The stage direction adjective "slain" is the final testament to confirm Macbeth's bravery. The adjective "slain" would have evoked shock in the audience as slain has evil and malicious connotations. "Slain" further reinforces Macbeth's status as a brave warrior as the adjective "slain" would have been used to describe the death of a very powerful person as being "slain" in battle was the most honourable and idealised way to die in the medieval era, the play's setting. In contrast to her husband's bravery Lady Macbeth is presented as the polar opposite of Macbeth and Macduff. Instead of being presented as brave and noble she is presented as sly and cowardice. Earlier in act 2, Lady Macbeth had not yet spurred her husband to commit the heinous act of regicide, Lady Macbeth is portrayed as conniving and sly when she proclaims, "Had he not resembled My father as he slept, I had done 't". The use of the modal verb "had" shows her inability to commit the murder this encapsulates the notion that she is hesitant and not a brave and fearless like her husband. Having seen the striking physical similarities between her father and the king Lady Macbeth is overwhelmed with indecisiveness. The use of the "," also reinforces the notion that she is hesitant the pause between the sentences exemplifies the idea that she is weak minded. However earlier in the play, Lady Macbeth declares "under my battlements". The preposition "under" evokes a sense of uneasiness in the audience as Lady Macbeth is proclaiming her authority. The personal pronoun "my" would have thrown the audience into an uproar, as women in the Jacobean audience would not have been allowed to own property. Lady Macbeth could have chosen to live a lavish life as the wife of a reputable thane yet wishes to appear brave and act masculine. On the other hand Lady Macbeth is then portrayed as disillusioned in act 5. Lady Macbeth exclaims, "Here's the smell of blood still. All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand". The use of the noun "still" exemplifies her pent up anger and also encapsulates her nihilistic approach to life as she is not brave enough to endure such mental torments. The adjective "sweethavehavehavehavehave" reveals Lady Macbeth's instability. Lady Macbeth then latter commits suicide which further reinforces the notion that she is unable to be: brave, courageous or chivalrous. The Christian majority audience would have very little sympathy for Lady Macbeth as suicide was viewed to be a sign of the weak and a direct punishment from God. Shakespeare warps the character of Lady Macbeth and punishes her for putting a false persona of bravery. He gives the audience a stark reminder that women should not exceed their position in society. As a Jacobean woman would have been regarded as: nurturing and caring whereas Lady Macbeth was: malicious and ruthless therefore she was punished to display her weakness at the end of the play.