

Critical comment on Macbeth

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Abstract

Macbeth is a tragedy by William Shakespeare written around 1606. *Macbeth* follows the story of a Scottish nobleman formally called as (Macbeth) who hears a prophecy that he will become king and is tempted to evil by the promise of power. *Macbeth* mainly dealt with the themes of evil in the individual and in the world more closely than any of Shakespeare's other works.

He (Macbeth) was a soldier, and not much more; he was capable, and not too thoughtful or self-doubting. In Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, it is the internal tension and crumbling of Macbeth, entirely Shakespeare's inventions, that give the play such literary traction.

It is a unique among Shakespeare's plays for dealing so explicitly with material that was relevant to England's contemporary political situation. The play is thought to have been written in the later part of 1606, three years after, the first Stuart king, took up the crown of England.

Lady Macbeth was stripped of her feminine qualities to give her the will power to carry on the deed of killing Duncan. To do this, she called for evil spirits to enter her. The death of Duncan is a sign to the both of them that evil has taken control of their lives. It has become an overpowering force that they cannot control. Macbeth's life becomes a living nightmare. He cannot stop killing people; he has become the slave to evil. The only connection left between Macbeth and his wife is the blood of the murdered.

In real this extract one of the great amazing penned narration of Shakespeare works. His use of diction and syntax in *Macbeth* are very apropos. The character's speech is expressed with not only words but with actions as well. Shakespeare's work was appreciated by not only the lover of his writing and also by the all the critics and authors.

Keywords: crumbling, treacherous, incriminating evidence, prevalent theme, significantly snubbed, unappreciative, placate.

Act 1

The play takes place in Scotland. Duncan, the king of Scotland, is at war with the king of Norway. As the play opens, he learns of Macbeth's bravery in a victorious battle against Macdonald—a Scot who sided with the Norwegians. At the same time, news arrives concerning the arrest of the treacherous Thane of Cawdor. Duncan decides to give the title of Thane of Cawdor to Macbeth.

As Macbeth and Banquo return home from battle, they meet three witches. The witches predict that Macbeth will be thane of Cawdor and king of Scotland, and that Banquo will be the father of kings. After the witches disappear, Macbeth and Banquo meet two noblemen and Angus, who announce Macbeth's new title as thane of Cawdor. Upon hearing this, Macbeth begins to contemplate the murder of Duncan in order to realize the witches' second prophecy.

Macbeth and Banquo meet with Duncan, who announces that he is going to pay Macbeth a visit at his castle. Macbeth rides ahead to prepare his household. Meanwhile, Lady Macbeth receives a letter from Macbeth informing her of the witches' prophesy and its subsequent realization. A servant appears to inform her of Duncan's approach. Energized by the news, Lady Macbeth invokes supernatural powers to strip her of

feminine softness and thus prepare her for the murder of Duncan. When Macbeth arrives, Lady Macbeth tells him that she will plot Duncan's murder.

When Duncan arrives at the castle, Lady Macbeth greets him alone. When Macbeth fails to appear, Lady Macbeth finds him in his room, contemplating the weighty and evil decision to kill Duncan. Lady Macbeth taunts him by telling him that he will only be a man if he kills Duncan. She then tells him her plan for the murder, which Macbeth accepts: they will kill him while his drunken bodyguards sleep, then plant incriminating evidence on the bodyguards.

Act II.

Banquo and son Fleance arrive at Macbeth's castle. Banquo is troubled by the Three Witches' prophecy and tells Macbeth this. Macbeth pretends not to take the Three Witches seriously.

Learning from Banquo that King Duncan is asleep, Macbeth, alone, follows an imaginary dagger to King Duncan's bedchamber where he will kill him in his sleep... Lady Macbeth has drugged King Duncan's guards, allowing Macbeth to kill King Duncan unchallenged.

Lady Macbeth was to have killed the King but his resemblance to her late father means Macbeth does the deed instead. A bell frightens Lady Macbeth and Macbeth too is nervous, but he announces that he did indeed kill King Duncan.

Macbeth recounts that the two guards cried out "Murder!" and later "God bless us!", Lady Macbeth telling her husband not to fret over such things and the fact that his conscience prevented him from saying "Amen," as one of the guards had done...

Lady Macbeth tells her husband a little water will wash away their guilt and the two retire to their bedroom when knocking is later heard...

Macduff, Lennox, the source of the knocking in the last scene, arrive at Macbeth's castle. News of King Duncan's death reaches all at Macbeth's castle. Lady Macbeth faints and Macbeth in rage kills the two drunken guards after claiming that they obviously killed their King.

These actions largely free Macbeth and Lady Macbeth from suspicion. King Duncan's sons, Malcolm and Donalbain are introduced, both men wisely deciding to flee Macbeth's castle as a precaution against their own murder. Malcolm will head for England, Donalbain for Ireland.

Ross speaks with an Old Man who describes various unnatural acts happening in Scotland, perhaps the single most significant scene for the theme of nature at war with itself, which relates to the idea of a natural order being disturbed by the death of a king, a prevalent theme throughout this play.

We learn that King Duncan's two sons have fled, leaving Macbeth to be crowned the new King of Scotland. Macduff, who later becomes instrumental in Macbeth's downfall, has significantly snubbed Macbeth's coronation at Scone to go to Fife instead. A tone of increasing despair for Scotland begins in this scene...

Act III.

Banquo is fearful that the Three Witches' prophecies are becoming true, questioning whether Macbeth played most foully for it, or killed King Duncan to make prophecy, fact.

Meeting with Macbeth, Macbeth continuously asks Banquo of his travel plans and those of his son. Alone, Macbeth fears that Banquo's sons will mean his dynasty will be short-lived; only he will become King of Scotland and not his sons who will be replaced by those of Banquo's lineage.

Macbeth arranges for several Murderers to discreetly kill Banquo and Fleance to ensure his sons and not Banquo's become future kings...

Lady Macbeth and Macbeth speak in private. Macbeth is again plagued by a guilt we thought may have vanished. Lady Macbeth attempts to strengthen Macbeth's resolve.

The Murderers kill Banquo but his son Fleance escapes and survives.

The Three Witches' prophecy of Banquo's sons becoming kings has not been thwarted by Macbeth...

Macbeth and a lady are entertaining at their castle. The First Murderer arrives, announcing that Banquo is dead but Fleance has lived. Macbeth immediately realizes the consequences of this (his descendants may not become kings).

Macbeth famously sees Banquo's Ghost at his party, causing Lady Macbeth to finish their party early to prevent further suspicions about Macbeth's sanity and about their role in recent events. Macbeth makes his famous speech about being too covered in blood to stop killing...

Hecate, clearly in a position of command over the Three Witches, scolds her subordinates for helping an unappreciative Macbeth.

Hecate instructs the Three Witches to make preparations for her plan to use illusion and the Three Witches' prophecies against Macbeth. The Three Witches, eager to placate (please) their master, eagerly make preparations, doing as they are told...

We see Lennox and a Lord discuss affairs in their kingdom. We learn from their conversation that an army is being formed in England to fight Macbeth.

Act IV.

A major turning point in the play. Just as the Three Witches prophesied Macbeth's ascendancy to become King in Act I, Scene III, here they prophesies his downfall with the Three Apparitions (visions / ghosts). The first Apparition tells an eager Macbeth that he should fear Macduff, saying "beware Macduff; / Beware the Thane of Fife." The Second Apparition reassures Macbeth that "none of women born / Shall harm Macbeth" and the Third Apparition tells Macbeth he has nothing to fear until "Great Birnam wood" moves to "high Dunsinane hill" near his castle.

Macbeth decides to kill Macduff to protect himself from him and takes the Apparition's words to mean he is safe from all men since they are all born naturally and that only the moving of a nearby forest to his castle, an unlikely event will spell his doom.

Next Macbeth demands to know about Banquo's descendants, learning to his anger that they will still rule Scotland rather than Macbeth's descendants. Macbeth learns that he cannot kill Macduff so instead has his entire family murdered...

Lady Macduff is greeted by Ross, Lady Macduff expressing her anger at being abandoned by Macduff for little reason when in her eyes, Macduff has done nothing requiring him to flee.

Ross leaves and after Lady Macduff tells her son that his father is dead and was a traitor, a Messenger warns Lady Macduff to flee but Macbeth's Murderers succeed in killing Lady Macduff's son. The scene ends with Lady Macduff fleeing for her life...

Malcolm and Macduff discuss how Scotland under Macbeth's rule has been plunged into despair. Malcolm tests Macduff's integrity by describing himself as unfit to rule.

After Malcolm disgusts Macduff with increasingly sordid descriptions of his lust and greed, Macduff tells Malcolm that like Macbeth, he too is not fit to rule Scotland. This delights Malcolm who explains that he was lying; he described himself so negatively to test Macduff's integrity. We learn that a large army is gathering to defeat Macbeth.

Act V.

Lady Macbeth's insanity becomes clear... First her Doctor and a Gentlewoman discuss Lady Macbeth's sleepwalking and talking to herself and then we, the audience see this for ourselves.

Lady Macbeth makes her famous speech that she cannot wipe away the blood on her hands (or her guilt), indicating that her battle to suppress her guilty conscience has failed completely...

Macbeth's enemies gather near his castle at Dunsinane as Macbeth strongly fortifies his castle. We learn that Macbeth's hold on Scotland is less than absolute...

Macbeth prepares to defiantly fight his enemies armed with the prophecy that he will only be defeated when the nearby Birnam Wood moves on his castle. Macbeth now learns of the ten thousand strong army against him. Seyton confirms this bad news and Macbeth donning his armor, prepares to fight his enemies recalling the Birnam Wood prophecy once more as a source of comfort...

With his troops loyally around him, Malcolm orders each man to cut down a branch from the nearby Birnam Wood as his army now camouflaged under an umbrella of Birnam Wood, head towards Macbeth's castle at Dunsinane.

Macbeth laughs off his enemies' numbers, certain of the Birnam Wood prophecy and equally certain that his fortifications should laugh off any attack.

We hear a women's cry later learning that Lady Macbeth is dead. Macbeth coldly shrugs the news that his once "dearest chuck," is dead with complete apathy. Macbeth learns that Birnam Wood or rather Malcolm's forces are moving on his castle. Realizing what this means, Macbeth nonetheless defiantly sets off to meet his destiny...

Malcolm's men drop their leafy camouflage and the battle begins...

Macbeth fights, Siward killing him. Macbeth is now confronted by Macduff, a man he has consciously avoided and one, he refuses to fight.

Macbeth famously exclaims that he has lived a charmed life and is unable to be killed by a man, naturally born.

Macduff now explains that he has born by Caesarian section and the two men fight, Macbeth dying and order being restored when Malcolm is hailed as the new King of Scotland...

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