

Elroy Huynh 11-2

Mrs. Pincus

English 3

Macbeth Shall Sleep No More! *etc.*

Sleep is defined as the natural periodic-suspension of consciousness during which the powers of the body are restored. There are many reasons for why a person sleeps. Some say it is to restore brain function and flush out metabolic wastes. Other say it is to allow the brain to review and consolidate the streams of information gathered while we are awake. Whatever the reason, sleep can be categorized with such bodily necessities as food, water, and sexual intercourse, for when one of them is withheld for a long period of time, one can go crazy. In Shakespeare's play "Macbeth", Macbeth suffers from insomnia, while Lady Macbeth suffers from sleepwalking, two contrasting realities; for one character faces a reality *without* sleep, and the other faces their reality *within* their sleep.

too vague Throughout the play, images of sleep are used by different characters in different manners. In Act I, we are introduced to the three witches, who cast a spell upon Macbeth that will take effect once he kills Duncan. This is in fact, the "insomnia" spell which will plague Macbeth through the rest of Shakespeare's play. The Witches or "Weird Sisters" are plotting against Macbeth, even from the beginning of the play when the audience is still not sure of what is going on. *They put a spell on him, saying:*

*I will drain him dry as hay.
Sleep shall neither night nor day
Hang upon his pent-house lid.
He shall live a man forbid. (I.iii.19-22)*

*lots of
about
insomnia*

*interesting
idea
re-frame it
with Shakespeare
included in sent*

In lines 19-22, the image of sleep is used as something that an individual needs in order to function properly. Sleep is a bodily function, and when it is withheld from a person, said person will become weaker and weaker without rest, and psychologically, they will become unstable. This is evident as we see Macbeth's character development.

Better
function
needed

Following the play chronologically, in Act II Macbeth has killed Duncan in his sleep, at which point the Witch's spell takes effect, and from this moment on in the play, Macbeth shall sleep no more. His troubles are just beginning. He leaves Duncan's room with his hands covered in blood, and when Lady Macbeth asks what happened, he replies:

OK

*methought I heard a voice cry, "Sleep no more!
Macbeth does murder sleep," – the innocent sleep,
Sleep that knits up the raveled sleeve of care,
The death of each day's life, sore labor's bath,
Balm of hurt minds, great nature's second course,
Chief nourisher in life's feast. (II.ii.47-52)*

In lines 47-52, the image of sleep is used as a metaphor for things that heal and care for the body, all of which Macbeth will not have, since he will never sleep again. When Macbeth tells Lady Macbeth of the voices he has heard, she dismisses it, and later insults him by calling him a child. Keep this in mind, as Lady Macbeth does not hear the voices that Macbeth hears. Ultimately, is it he who will suffer from insomnia, and not Lady Macbeth.

(no one did
watches put
a spell on
her)

In Act III, Macbeth is discussing his insomnia with his wife. For the first time in the play, we see that Macbeth envies Duncan, not because he was king of Scotland, but because he is dead, "sleeping" in his grave. One can see that Macbeth desires to sleep peacefully so much, that he envies a dead man. He says:

He says:

*Ere we will eat our meal in fear, and sleep
 In the affliction of these terrible dreams
 That shake us nightly. Better be with the dead,
 Whom we, to gain our peace, have sent to peace,
 Than on the torture of the mind to lie
 In restless ecstasy. Duncan is in his grave.
 After life's fitful fever he sleeps well.
 Treason has done his worst; nor steel nor poison,
 Malice domestic, foreign levy, nothing
 Can touch him further. (III.ii.20-26)*

We begin to notice some of the psychological effects of lack of sleep. It would appear that Macbeth is beginning to find himself eating his meals in fear, and is describing life as a "fitful fever" of which Duncan needs not face any longer. Notice that as far as we can see, Lady Macbeth has no problem going to sleep. Two scenes later, we observe a huge contrast between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. In Act III, Scene IV, Macbeth begins to see the ghost of Banquo at his dinner, who[^] he had just ordered to be killed. Another side effect of lack of sleep is hallucinations, visualizing objects that are not really there. While Macbeth can see Banquo's ghost, Lady Macbeth cannot. We can assume that at night, she has no problem sleeping. On the other hand, while Lady Macbeth *can* fall asleep, it does not mean she is sleeping peacefully in her bed. We become aware of this in Act V.

The final act of "Macbeth" opens with the Gentlewoman speaking to the Doctor about the strange actions of Lady Macbeth. Apparently, she is not sleeping as peacefully as we had thought.

*Since his majesty went into the field, I
 have seen her rise from her bed, throw her night-
 gown upon her, unlock her closet, take forth paper,
 fold it, write upon't, read it, afterwards seal it, and
 again return to bed; yet all this while in a most fast
 sleep. (V.i.4-9)*

→ So there
 something
 that
 happens to
 change
 L.M ?

She is sleepwalking, as mysterious then as it was now; an abnormal act, "to receive at once the benefit of sleep and do the effects of watching." ^(catch) Lady Macbeth is receiving all the advantages of sleep, while at the same time, regretting killing Duncan, and realizing the horrors of her actions. She is living her life *within* her sleep. Throughout the play, we can see that she shows no remorse for what she has done. In lines 4-9, the image of a person sleepwalking can be interpreted as someone who is trying to accomplish something that they cannot do while they are awake. In Lady Macbeth's sleep, she is living a separate life in which she is haunted by stains and the scent of blood on her hands which will not wash out, and she is trying to repent for her sins.

Throughout Shakespeare's "Macbeth", the image of sleep has many interpretations for different characters. In the case of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, one person suffers from lack of the benefits of sleep, while the other suffers *while* receiving the benefits of sleep. William Shakespeare uses many images in his plays, such as light and dark, water, blood, nature, animals, and of course, sleep. Through the image of sleep, Shakespeare shows us how a person can go utterly insane from lack of it, and die from living through it, conveyed by two of his round characters, Macbeth, and Lady Macbeth.

You only mention 2

→ so is this separation healthy or an illness

not nec.

weak