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### Fountains of Water

Water is a necessity, the essential fiber required by living beings to sustain life. In his work, Shakespeare incorporates this image of water and its meaning in the tragedy of *Macbeth* as a pure and innocent element signifying changes within the characters and the plot. From Macbeth's noble beginnings to his tragic defeat, the significance of water is portrayed as a pure and natural substance which becomes tainted by blood.

In the opening scenes of the play, Shakespeare cleverly uses the image of water to display the current or future developments in the plot and the characters. Fresh from the savage battlefield, Macbeth and Banquo are highly praised by King Duncan after hearing news of their success in Macdonwald's defeat. Here, Shakespeare projects Macbeth as a loyal noble to the king but later, his outward identity gradually reverses to a traitorous villain. The changes in Macbeth's behavior parallels the obstacles encountered by Macbeth told by the Captain of the:

Shipwrecking storms and direful thunders break,

So from that spring whence comfort seemed to

come,

Discomfort swells. (I.ii.28-31)

The gushing spring represents Macbeth's obligations to the crown but it also foreshadows his growing ambition for a stake at the throne. His honest relationship with Duncan turns to deceit as

his wife urges him to pursue his "Vaulting ambitions"(I.vii.27). Shakespeare portrays the stormy image as evidence of future disturbance amongst the social ranking as conjured by God. The spring signals the upcoming shifts of Macbeth's character as ambition overcomes his conscience.

Shakespeare defines water as this earthly and natural creation of God. This is evident when Banquo and Macbeth first meet the three Weird Sisters. The two thanes hear the prophecy then, a puzzled Banquo says "the Earth hath bubbles as water has, / And these are of them"(I.iii.82-83). Shakespeare draws a comparison between the Earth and water as godly creations containing bubbles from which the witches have emerged. It is a sign which leads to the regal backstabbing by Macbeth. When things have not yet changed for the worst, the imagery of water remains untouched. *- a bit unclear -*

Shakespeare also associates the image of water with honesty and the cleansing of one's guilt and sadness based on loyalty. True emotional sorrow and grief in the form of tears is shown as a release of pure feelings. Duncan as we know commits complete and utter trust to those faithful to him. He is prideful for his army's victory and the fidelity of Banquo and Macbeth.

Duncan feels expresses:

My plenteous joys,

Wanton in fullness, seek to hide themselves

In drops of sorrow. (I.iv.39-41)

His faithful subjects' gratifying service almost brings him to tears. The tears from Duncan would be interpreted as the purest form of water since his appointment to kingship is a choice of God. Ironically, Macbeth himself begins to plan for his king's death even after the last traitor was executed. He reasons with himself and knows that it "shall blow the horrid deed in every eye, /

That tears shall drown the wind" should he follow through (I.vii.23-24). The crying of the king's people reflects whole-hearted support and dedication to another human being, an utmost sign of human purity.

As quickly as the plot progresses, the image of water is stained by blood from shady series of deaths. The blood upon Lady Macbeth and her husband's hands remain a constant reminder of their guilty roles as conspirators in the murders. The remorse felt by both grows proportionately to the increasing number of lives taken. After the slaughter of the godly Duncan and his guards, Macbeth is too petrified to think logically so his wife casually advises him to "Go get some water and wash this filthy witness from your hand"(II.ii.60-61). But Macbeth, haunted by his actions cries:

Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood  
Clean from my hand? No, this hand will rather  
The multitudinous seas incarnadine,  
Making the green one red. (II.ii.78-81)

Water, an ingredient essential to vitality, is used by Shakespeare to conceal the most terrible of all the crimes in the world, a sin against God. But, this image of water rather than water itself cannot dispel the tremendous burden on both Macbeth's and his wife's shoulders. The imagery is tainted by the bloody acts as well as the lives of Banquo, Macduff, his son, servants, and the son of Siward. In Act I scene VII, the purity of King Duncan's "drops of sorrow" does not compare with Macbeth's dilemma (I.iv.39-41). Although the water has washed away the stains, the metaphor it represents cannot erase the lingering dreadful guilt. The burden has certainly taken a toll on Lady Macbeth's health specifically in Act V as she is caught sleepwalking and seen with

God

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“an accustomed action with her to / seem thus washing her hands”(V.i.30-31). As a result of these events, the significance of water denotes the effect of the changes to a dark and heavy atmosphere. *not exactly clean*

In the closing scenes of Act V, water reveals the ultimate tragedy afflicting the kingdom of Scotland. Macbeth is first introduced in the play as this trusted exemplary war general but his unexpected rise to power is threatened by the Scottish and English armies advancing to uproot him. Those near to Macbeth realize he is a threat to Scotland and have turned their backs against him. Before the siege of Inverness, Macbeth pleads to the doctor:

If thou couldst, doctor, cast

The water of my land, find her disease,

And purge it to a sound and pristine health. (V.iii.62-64).

Ironically, he seeks the doctor's help to rid of whatever is plaguing the country but overlooks the source of the unrest, himself. Macbeth suspects it is found in the “water of [his] land”, though it is already infected by his bloodied hands. The obligation of the noblemen to their rightful duties brings them “To dew the sovereign flower and drown the weeds” (V.ii.36). In other words, Malcolm, the true heir to the throne, will be hailed as king while Macbeth is drown in his own blood. The death of Macbeth marks the removal of “[Scotland's] disease” from the waters and the return to the country's “sound and pristine health”(V.iii.63-64). At last, the goodness in Macduff that is once seen in Macbeth helps crown the chosen king and restore order to the shaken community. *nicc*

In the drama of *Macbeth*, the image of water and its meaning transforms from a substance of purity to one of filthiness tainted by blood. But in the end, the peace returns to normal.

Shakespeare shows water and blood as polar opposites, symbolizing the goodness and evil of human beings. The innocence of water seemingly rises from the depths to combat the surging evil that is blood which portrays the ongoing battle of good versus evil. Shakespeare shows the rise of evil in people that is eventually brought down by compassion of humanity in an inevitable loop faced by human beings. Whether for better or worse, the destined course of human serves as an unescapable field where people are caught up in an endless conflict between good and evil.

↓ Plus a little too pat. -  
Aren't blood and water both nec. for  
life. It's the shedding of blood that is  
evil, don't you think