

Macbeth Essay

1st
change

Shakespeare's Macbeth is the story of a loyal army general whose desires and self-affliction for power and glory provide the drive to usurp the king's throne. Throughout the play, Shakespeare uses images to depict the changes in the plot and characters through specific objects as the story unfolds. One such image, water, is one whose meaning as well as its physical form a gradual change. From Macbeth's noble beginnings to his tragic defeat, the significance of water is seen as a pure and natural substance that eventually turned to a tainted and dirty image.

2nd

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... from that spring whence comfort seemed to come, discomfort swells." 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." 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.

Insert 3rd
paragraph

Shakespeare also associates the image of water with the cleansing of ones guilt and sadness. True emotional sorrow and grief in the form of tears is seen 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 "...plenteous joys, Wanton in fullness, seek to hide themselves / In drops of sorrow." 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 was considered a choice of God. Ironically, Macbeth himself begins to plan for his king's death 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. The crying of the king's people would reflect whole-hearted support and dedication to another human being, an utmost sign of human purity.

4th

Water. Macbeth suspects it is found in the water of the river himself. Macbeth is already infected with blood. Water and the blood in the play are from opposite water is the element of goodness and innocence whereas blood is associated with darkness and betrayal. The innocence of water seems to be free the desire to control of this strange evil, portraying the battle of good vs evil vs darkness. Conclusion - message. Continuous cycle changes with (balance) of evil/good in human beings. Destructive nature of human beings in all of us.

As quickly as the plot progresses, the meaning of water ^{edit} 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 quandary. 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 "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.

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 he is ^{his unexpected nu} certain of the suspicion by others when Scottish and English nobles advance 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 diluting the water with blood. Water and the blood in the play are shown as polar opposites; water is the element of goodness and innocence whereas blood is associated with darkness and betrayal. The innocence of water seems to rise from the depths to combat the control of this surging evil, portraying the battle of good vs evil or light vs darkness.

Conclusion - message

- Continuous cyclic changes with (balance of) evil/good in human beings?
- Destructive nature of human beings in all of us?

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 all returns to normal in the end. Shakespeare shows water & blood as polar opposites, goodness of evil.

Include quote (V.ii.36)

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