

# Macy welch

Literature, William Shakespeare



Macy Welch Mrs. Marquardt English IV Honors 25 January 2013 Shakespeare invites alternate readings with supernatural effects and Macbeth is one of his most powerful plays because he includes evil witches that make it hard to control your destiny and unnatural settings lead to Macbeth's own mind disease. No literary work is wreathed in superstition more than Macbeth. Shakespeare is famous for contrasting imagery within his plays to develop characterization, make a point, or establish an atmosphere. Shakespeare makes the point of Macbeth invoking evil spirits because he is possessed by the witches by contrasting natural and supernatural events. He also leaves the reader to decide if his actions are provoked by his fear and wishes to be king or is it the supernatural forces troubling him. The supernatural occurrences play a huge part in Macbeth. Elizabethan's have several beliefs in superstitions and superstitions are the unknown unseen of the universe. Superstitions are also woven into the plot of Macbeth. Some superstitions include that they believe in witches, ghosts, destiny, and the foretelling of the future. Natural order is used to foreshadow and show the mindset of people in Shakespeare's time. Chain of being was a superstition that meant the people in Shakespearean England knew it was prohibited to move about your place in being. When something was unexplainable, they would relate that problem to the supernatural. The "weird sisters" had all the features of witches in those days. For example, they were old people, wore dirty broken clothes, and came together in groups of three. Witches are regarded as old women who have sold their souls to the devil, and assumed the bodies of old women for their evil purposes. In Shakespeare time witches were also known as goddesses of punishment. The witches had many animals but the toad

and cat were used as evil spirits who had taken this unnatural form. The owl is often heard in Macbeth and it gives the play a sense of scariness that makes it thrilling to read, it helps the reader be alert to the evil, and the suspense increases with every scary sound. The witches caused all the dreams and mind diseases. For example, the invisible dagger that Macbeth sees before killing Duncan is created by the witches. The word nightmare is often called in Shakespeare's time, "the riding of the witch", which is a superstition of a witch riding wildly on horseback through the night, visiting her victim's bad dreams. Supernatural can be described as unnatural and it occurs in Macbeth a great deal of times. The appearance of the witches, the strange behavior in nature on the night of Duncan's murder, or those of disturbances of nature, the appearance of Banquo's ghost, the apparitions with their prophecies, and the invisible dagger that leads Macbeth towards his victim are examples of supernatural effects of Macbeth. Shakespeare contrasts the differences of the actual meaning of the prophecies in an unnatural setting of his play by the witches making him believe the apparitions are different than the natural meaning making a point that these prophecies lead him to his death. Still, it is left deliberately ambiguous whether some of them are self-fulfilling—for example, whether Macbeth wills himself to be king or is fated to be king. Additionally, as the Birnam Wood and "born of woman" prophecies make clear, the prophecies must be interpreted as riddles, since they do not always mean what they seem to mean. The apparitions in act four; scene one have special meaning. The first apparition, the helmeted head, actually represents Macbeth and echoes the fears of his mind concerning Macduff. The witches say it means beware

Macduff. The second apparition, the bloody child, represents Macduff as no man born of women would ever conquer him. Macduff's birth was unnatural and soon murders Macbeth. Macduff was born by Caesarian section, a procedure which would mean is not born naturally " of woman". The third apparition of a crowned child bearing a tree represents Malcolm. The apparition told Macbeth that he would never be harmed until Birnam Wood came to Dunsinane Hill. The prophecies at the beginning of the play led him to his success as the prophecies towards the end led him to his death. Also, a ghost is a form of superstition since it cannot be explained. Banquo and his show of kings are in a form of a ghost and a ghost may have possessed the seemingly hardheaded Lady Macbeth who eventually gives way to visions, as she sleepwalks and believes that her hands are stained with blood that cannot be washed away by any amount of water. Macbeth reads these as signs of supernatural signs of their guilt which can be natural for some people that murder others. Macbeth cries after he has killed Duncan, even as his wife scolds him and says that a little water will do the job (2. 2. 58—59). Later, though, she comes to share his horrified sense of being stained: " Out, damned spot; out, I say . . . who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him? " she asks as she wanders through the halls of their castle near the close of the play (5. 1. 30—34). Blood symbolizes the guilt that sits like a permanent stain on the consciences of both Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, one that hounds them to their graves. Macbeth and his history is said to be a cursed play so actors avoid saying the name and call it the " Scottish Play". Shakespeare's primary source for Macbeth was Raphael Holinshed's Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland, first published in

1577. The outlines of Shakespeare's story are derived from Holinshed's account of Kings Duncan and Macbeth. In addition, Shakespeare seems to have taken many specifics from Holinshed's account of King Duffe, who died eighty years before Macbeth did. All of the principal characters in Macbeth are historical with the exceptions of Banquo and his son Fleance.

Shakespeare got Banquo and Fleance from Holinshed, who reported them as real historical people. However, modern history considers them to have been a myth promoted by the dynasty which ruled Scotland during Holinshed's and Shakespeare's time. In 1040, Duncan, who was a weak king, decided to exert his authority over Moray by invading it. Macbeth defeated Duncan with the help of Thorfinn, the Norse Earl of Orkney. Either during the battle, or shortly after it, Macbeth killed Duncan. Holinshed says "killed." There is no mention of murder. Macbeth and Lady Macbeth were not guilty of the murder of Duncan as portrayed by Shakespeare. Shakespeare got the story of the murder from Holinshed, but in Holinshed, it is the murder of King Duff by Macdonwald and his wife. In 1057, Duncan's son Malcolm defeated Macbeth in battle. Macbeth fled but was killed by MacDuff, the Thane of Fife, in revenge for the killing of his family by Macbeth a year earlier. Macbeth was succeeded as king by his stepson, Lulach, but Lulach was defeated and killed by Malcolm after only a few months. In Macbeth, Macbeth was not defeated by Malcolm in battle or succeeded as king by Lulach. The witches are also in Holinshed and appear to be an old story. My guess is that Malcolm's wife, Margaret, started the story in order to discredit both Macbeth and Celtic Christianity. Or, perhaps, Macbeth, who was at least partially Norse, may have been open-minded about the old Norse gods. Work

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