

Lady macbeth and miss havisham essay sample

[Literature](#), [British Literature](#)



Both Lady Macbeth and Miss Havisham are presented as two very disturbed characters - Lady Macbeth in Shakespeare's play "Macbeth" and Miss Havisham in the poem Havisham by Carol Ann Duffy. Both women in each of the texts that I have analysed come across as being disturbed, being disturbed in the sense that both Havisham and Lady Macbeth are psychologically disturbed and also disturbed in the sense that they both want to interrupt peace. From prior research I have found that the definition of disturbed is and I quote directly from [www. dictionary. reference. com](http://www.dictionary.reference.com) "agitated or distressed; disrupt" or "marked by symptoms of mental illness" from reading the two texts we can clearly see that lady Macbeth is marked by symptoms of mental illness whereas miss Havisham is clearly agitated. There are several more meanings of the word disturbed. Some are as follows; emotionally upset, maladjusted, disarranged, to interrupt or hinder peace and order. Lady Macbeth has been shown to have dwelled on the killing of Macbeth so much so that it has caused her mind to hallucinate the fact that she has blood on her hands.

She has also been shown as a woman who is abnormal for the Elizabethan times when this play was first written. Havisham is left to rot in isolation after her husband didn't turn up to his wedding day when Miss Havisham was meant to be married. The thought of this has left her in psychological distress. In this essay I'm going to be exploring the ways in which lady Macbeth comes across as having a disturbed character in the play Macbeth and I will also be exploring the ways in which Havisham comes across as being disturbed in the poem Havisham. I am going to start off by analysing Lady Macbeth. In act 1 scene 5, Lady Macbeth reads a letter that puts the

whole idea of killing king Duncan into motion. From the start she has started to indicate that she is doubtful in the fact whether Macbeth would go to such extremes of killing the king so that he gains kingship. She says that “ yet I fear thy nature; it is too full o’ the milk of human kindness” here Lady Macbeth implies that Macbeth is much too kind to do such a thing. He has included the imagery of milk which is associated with children. It is like she is almost saying that Macbeth is not so brave, he is childlike and just like a child, innocent and cowardly to go and kill the king.

However this is very ironic as from the play itself, Shakespeare has displayed him as a powerful warrior, so much so that he is the best warrior at the time showing not mercy to anyone in battle therefore for lady Macbeth to link him in with a childlike figure is very ironic and it completely opposes his status as a powerful warrior. Also the word choices she has used such as “ human kindness” suggests that to perform such an act, you would have to dehumanise yourself and avoid acknowledging any human logic that would restrict you from doing such a thing because it would be abnormal for a human to think like this hence showing that because lady Macbeth has brought such a thing into her thought process, she shows signs of being disturbed, unhuman and also that her mind has not fully developed so that it makes sensible decisions. Also the use of the noun milk also links in with the imagery of a child and it brings about the imagery of nurturing a child and Shakespeare has contrasted the image of nurturing the child and the killing of Duncan together and metaphorically presented the juxtaposition between the two images.

Lady Macbeth is also shown as having a gender issue. Since this play was written in the Elizabethan times, women were inferior to men. Men had more power and status so much so that women weren't allowed to partake in the conversations that men had; men were the head of the family and would take control of all the decisions of the household. However in the play we can see that lady Macbeth is woeful of the fact that she is a woman and is restricted to do things that would otherwise be permissible for men. Further in act 1 scene 5 lady Macbeth addresses the witches saying " come you spirits...unsex me here" clearly we can see she is unhappy that she is a woman. Her address to the witches was also that of an unusual one. The words come you spirit suggest that Lady Macbeth is mad and has a disturbed mind as no one with a stable mind set would call upon the spirits. Conjointly I can also make the point that spirits are something that do not exist however her seeing sprits or even feeling the presence of them are a result of her disturbed and maladjusted mind.

The sentences she has used are not of a big length. The phrase has been significantly emphasised. There are commas both before and after the phrase making the words very prominent in the monologue that she has on stage. The effect of this is that she is trying to get directly to the point that she is making of being unhappy of the fact she is a woman because that's what the main restriction is for why her opinions are not heard. The calling on to the spirits is also a significant section of the quote. By calling onto the spirit, the effect on Lady Macbeth herself is that she is taking spiritual power provided by the spirits to give her that extra authority so she can manipulate Macbeth in such a way that agrees with her conspiracy. In comparison with

the character of Miss Havisham we can see that the fact that Lady Macbeth wants to eliminate all factors that make her female is not seen in the character of Miss Havisham. Miss Havisham does not have a gender issue, unlike Lady Macbeth; she wants to keep her femininity and all the qualities that make her a woman.

In the Victorian era, it was seen to be unusual and looked down upon if a woman was not married. Miss Havisham however didn't get married and hence for the Victorian times she was an abnormal woman and the thought of this makes her want to break the hearts of all men just like her heart was broken. Her abnormality is a point of linkage between the herself and Lady Macbeth. Lady Macbeth has mainly talked in inferences through the play and her cunning and her ambiguous character has been displayed several times throughout. Whilst in a conversation with Macbeth, Lady Macbeth says " your face...is as a book where men may read strange matters" she is trying to get across the innocence on his face. The fact that she calls his face a book suggests his personality is clear and innocent. It shows that Macbeth is straightforward and normal like any other person at the time.

Lady Macbeth uses effective imagery here of a book. A book contains information that is clear and concise. This is linked in with the personality of Macbeth. However lady Macbeth wants to change that and give him a disturbed personality that is ambiguous, I know this because She later on goes on to say " look like the innocent flower, but be the serpent under't" in this phrase there has been a juxtaposition of two concepts, One being the sinless and the other being the sinful. The innocent flower represents the

sinless, whereas the serpent leads the reader to associate the serpent with the devil. The devil in this case is the sinful concept. The quote can be biblically referenced to the story of Adam and Eve. In the story, Eve was the one to convince Adam into eating the fruit. In the play Lady Macbeth is predominant character who convinces Macbeth to kill. Duncan. The level of control that Lady Macbeth has, promotes her disturbed character as she is not thinking the same as other women of the Elizabethan Era.

In the previous quote I have come up with a religious connotation. In relation to Miss Havisham, we can see that there is also religious reference in the poem just like there is in the play Macbeth. We can see that both women include religion to get their point of view across. Miss Havisham does it in a more direct way whereas lady Macbeth is more subtle and conveys it through inferences. In the Elizabethan times, religion played a vital role in the lives of the people hence the Elizabethan audience would have easily been able to understand the real meaning behind this quote. Furthermore In the Victorian times, religion was also a big part of people's lives. Church was a powerful place and most of the times, the church would set the laws, it ultimately acted like the government of the time and hence religion was a big part of their lives. A prominent imagery in the play Macbeth is the violence and brutality of the situation of killing Duncan. While Lady Macbeth tries to manipulate Macbeth into following her plan, she gives a vast range of imagery to persuade Macbeth into doing so. In act one scene seven, Lady Macbeth uses a contrast of imagery to put her idea forward.

" I have given suck... while it was still smiling in my face...plucked my nipple... and dash'd the brains out" here she compares the killing of Duncan to the killing of her own child. The ultimate effect of this is that it manifests her unstable and disturbed mind however on the other hand it also puts into perspective her sheer power and the extremes she can go to and again all this is the product of her disturbed mind. The imagery of the child is still sustained till this point. Throughout the scene she has implied that Macbeth is the child and she is like the parent due to her dominance. Therefore using the imagery of the child here again, she tries to make the dialogue personal for Macbeth himself, something that he can relate to. As a result Lady Macbeth is the source of the hindrance in peace and order. Along with the child imagery, the imagery of motherhood is also presented. This further creates the atmosphere of unstableness because again there are two concepts that are juxtaposed alongside each other, the theme of love and motherhood and the theme of violence and brutality. Also the level of brutality in the quote is that of a high level.

It puts a vivid image in the readers head and really makes the reader think about the violence. Just like her mind state she creates a disturbing image in Macbeth head something that allows him to see one brutal act compared with the other. The word choice also has allowed her to create such an impact on Macbeth's mind that the deed of killing of a child outweighs the deed of killing the king. The verb dash'd is a powerful verb that Lady Macbeth has used. Also the sentence that the verb has been used in is separated with two commas, one before and one after again creating a huge

emphasis on the words. The verb dash'd is onomatopoeic and the just the sound of the word puts forward the brutal and violent image.

These show that lady Macbeth is disturbed because a motherly figure would never do that to her child and the fact that this has even come into her thought process shows signs of her disturbed mind. Comparing the characters of Lady Macbeth and Miss Havisham, we can see that even Miss Havisham uses onomatopoeic words. The word " Bang" is used by Miss Havisham to again convey their feelings. Both lady Macbeth and Miss Havisham have strong feeling about the different situations they are in and by conveying their feelings through words like Bang or dash'd really aids the reader to feel how strongly they feel for the particular situation. Again both the words are associated with violence and aggressiveness. The sound of the words clearly portrays this.

In act 2, scene 2 Macbeth had killed Duncan and had come back to lady Macbeth, in that conversation, lady Macbeth tries to reassure Macbeth that things will be good now. Macbeth has started to regret the fact that he has just killed Duncan, we can see this when Macbeth says " this is a sorry sight..." lady Macbeth then tries to reassure him and says " a foolish thought..." " These deeds must not be thought... it will make us mad" lady Macbeth shows here that she still possesses that control over Macbeth.

Towards the end of the play in act 5 scene 1, Lady Macbeth has been shown to have gone mad as she has dwelled on the situation so much. However this is very surprising because in act 2 scene 2 we saw that lady Macbeth herself has said that we shouldn't think about the deeds so much because they

would make us mad. Her own words have become her way of life, it has become reality. The phrase “out damned spot” and “I say—one two why then” really shows the aftereffects that the incident of killing of Duncan had on the mind of lady Macbeth. The noun “spot” is also of importance in this sentence. In the Elizabethan times the way that people would identify a witch was if the woman or man had a spot on their body.

We saw that in act 1 scene 5 lady Macbeth calls the spirits directly, it is as if she has become a spirit or even a witch for that matter and she now has the spot that makes her the witch. None the less we can feel the sense of despair and the regret she has for doing the deed and the psychological image of the spot not being able to be washed away from her hand suggests that the deed committed will also not be washed away it is like a scar onto the mind. We can see that language is also disjointed and agitated. This gives the reader a perspective into how the deed that was committed affected her. Her mind is so disturbed by the deed that she is unable to articulate her speech properly and this again is the result of her maladjusted mind. Also the sentences are separated by several commas hence slowing the pace down. Lady Macbeth has to think twice as long to speak but even then she is unable to get a clear sentence spoken.

Linking this in with the character of Miss Havisham, we can see that she too had a problem with the articulation of words. she makes this evident nearer the end of the poem. Also the quote “... curses that are sounds not words” This shows that just like lady Macbeth, miss Havisham’s thought of the situation is overpowering the thought of anything else in their mind. Their

mind is so distracted and disturbed by the thought that they are unable to focus on what to say and how to say it. Towards the end of act 5 we can see that lady Macbeth walks in her sleep and starts to wash her hands regardless of the fact that she does not have blood on her hands. However for the first time lady Macbeth can be interpreted as being a child figure. In the quote “ come, come... give me your hand”, lady Macbeth can be said to be the child figure wanting to hold someone’s hand and be controlled rather than to control.

The imagery of the child is now upon Lady Macbeth’s character. After having all that control in the beginning she is reduced down to being the child. Also something else we can illustrate from this is that all along lady Macbeth has been the child like figure throughout the play. Despite having the power, it is fair to say that lady Macbeth was not wise enough whilst making the decisions and when she did make decisions, it all just finished horribly wrong. We can compare the character of Lady Macbeth with a child with no wisdom, just like a child she thought she knew best however she soon knew that she has done wrong. In fact Macbeth can be seen as the wiser person who was saying that the whole thing shouldn’t be happening however like a child with no wisdom, Lady Macbeth took things into her own hands and then realised she had made a mistake. In the end the child faces the consequences and the consequences she faced were of madness.

I am now going to explore the ways that the character of Miss Havisham is portrayed as being disturbed. Miss Havisham’s character is set in the Victorian time period and so the beliefs and the society were very different

to modern day society. In the Victorian period, it was looked down upon if a woman was not married, it gave a people the sense that the woman is unwanted and is not loved by anyone so what is her use, that woman is worthless without a man. It was this thought that led Miss Havisham to a distraught mind and it led her to be disjointed from all aspects of live. Miss Havisham is presented as a disturbed and confused character from the beginning. Carol Ann Duffy has used an oxymoron to convey the feelings of Miss Havisham. In the lines "beloved sweetheart bastard" the contrast between "beloved" and "bastard" gives a sense that miss Havisham has mixed feeling about the person who left her on her wedding day. The oxymoron displays the unstable combination of desire and hatred all leading the reader to think that she isn't quite in loved however doesn't hate that person.

The oxymoron used clearly juxtaposes the two elements that contradict each other showing the disturbed mind of Lady Macbeth. In comparison to Lady Macbeth, it is quite different. Miss Havisham gives out a sense of confusion and uncertainty whereas the character of lady Macbeth knew what she wanted from the beginning. In the Victorian times, people had a great belief in church and religion hence it was a big part of their lives, the character of Miss Havisham also a believer of this. I know this because the poem says "...wished him dead...prayed for it so hard" here we can see that religion is part of her life. From being unsure about how she feels, as the poem progresses, the hatred for this man increases. We can see from the quote that Miss Havisham was obsessed about having the man that left her dead. The fact that she prays for it shows that she is disturbed. Prayer is a point of contact

with god and the person praying and the fact that she prays for something negative to happen suggests that she is mad. However it also shows the intensity of her feelings, and we can clearly see that it is the intensity of the feelings that she dwells upon and is agitated and disturbed.

Through this quote we are able to suggest some points of linkage. Like Lady Macbeth contacted the spirits, miss Havisham is contacting God. We can see that both women contact some kind of higher authority to in a sense punish who they want to. They both have a motive for violence, brutality and death thus through contacting the spirits and God we are able to understand the profound feelings that the characters both have towards the people they want to kill. Through the poem we can see that Miss Havisham is not happy about being alone, the thought that no one loves her is quite distressing for her and she brings out her frustration, however there is no one to listen to her. We can see that she says " whole days in bed cawing nooooooo at the wall" we can see that the feelings of violence and the longing for the man to die is quite immensely put forward in this quote. The word cawing suggests a animalistic sound. It completely dehumanises the character of Havisham to an animal. It is as if the ability to verbalise her feelings have gone. This consequently makes the reader feel that the mind of miss Havisham is slowly decaying away, first her speech decays then the mind.

This therefore makes miss Havisham a disturbed woman in the sense that she is mentally unstable due to the rotting of her mind. Comparing this to lady Macbeths character we can see that her speech towards the end of the play was disorientated and incoherent for example " I say - - one: two:" It is

therefore fair to say that the situations that they are both in have a big part to play in the fact that it made them psychologically weaker and has given them both a disturbed personality. Miss Havisham does portray some feelings to do with happiness and with love however the feelings are disturbed by the bursting of a balloon. " a red balloon bursting in my face". We can interpret this quote in many ways. First of all we can say that the feelings of joy and happiness can be associated with the balloon, and we can see that this is her first attempt of conveying a theme of celebration. However as she remembers what happened to her, the balloon bursts and all the feelings are linked with celebration also burst.

Also the colour of the balloon can be understood in different concepts. Red can be the colour associated with love however it can also be associated with feelings of anger. Linking this quote to the quote that I analysed first, we can see that the unstable combination of love and desire is also visible here again. However we can interpret the image of the red balloon in an alternative way as well. The red balloon may symbolise Miss Havisham's heart that once was filled with happiness and celebration however burst when her future husband did not turn up to the wedding. The burst of the balloon shows the shock that Miss Havisham was left in after she was left in isolation. This same shock put Miss Havisham in a place of distress and agitation. Overall we can see that both characters are presented in ways that make it evident that they have a mental illness or are disturbed. we can also see that the social and historical background of these two women played a substantial role in what they could and couldn't do. The fact that miss Havisham is looked down upon because she is not married is one of the

reasons why she is disturbed, however in modern society we know that it is perfectly fine for a woman to not get married.

As for lady Macbeth we have seen that there has been an considerable amount of changes as to what a woman can and cannot do. The women in modern society are just as important as men and women are allowed to pursue a career. However we can see that through things such as stuttering language and obsessiveness the characters were presented as disturbed. in the beginning of the essay I wrote down a few meaning of the word disturbed and we can see that both lady Macbeth and miss Havisham fit into the category and being disturbed, for example lady Macbeth showed signs of mental illness whereas miss Havisham showed feelings of agitation and distress.