

Macbeth and post traumatic stress disorder

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



Post Traumatic Stress Disorder is a common psychological condition that is triggered by terrifying events. This disorder compels the inhibitor to have severe anxiety, flashbacks and negative fluctuations in mood. Likewise, in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, there is clear evidence of how guilt, wickedness and atrocity can also cause symptoms similar to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, as negative actions and instinctive weaknesses can cause cerebral degeneration. Macbeth's innate flaws led to his ultimate mental deterioration.

The troubled mindset and degradation of Macbeth's conscience, grants him to envision supernatural activities. Shortly before King Duncan's murder, Macbeth vividly sees a floating dagger with its handle toward him. Macbeth exclaims, "Is this a dagger which I see before me," as he tries to grab it, "The handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch thee." (2. 1. 33-35) This short soliloquy demonstrates the disordered, and unbalanced mind of Macbeth. It also depicts Macbeth as an unwilling factor of fate, as he is no longer able to help himself in his disturbed state of mind. Another incidence of Macbeth's hallucination pattern is when he sees the ghost of Banquo. Frightened in the sight of the ghost, Macbeth fearfully shouts, "Prithee, see there! Behold! Look! Lo! How say you? Why, what care I? If thou canst nod, speak too. If charnel houses and our graves must send those that we bury back, our monuments shall be the maws of kites." (3. 4. 72-76) This justifies the agony and torment that Macbeth is exhibiting in his mind. The ghost of Banquo is essentially a symbol of accusation and guilt, as Banquo was murdered under Macbeth's order. However, in this scene Macbeth is the only individual who can see the ghost, which is another example of his mental

breakdown as he is experiencing supernatural hallucinations. To sum up the noted idea, it is conspicuous that Macbeth's unmistakable weaknesses are consuming his perception and conclusively leading to his mental degeneration, and in continuation enabling his ego and ambition to grow.

As Macbeth's conscience decreases, his ambition and motivation escalates. Soon after getting away with the murder of King Duncan, and being crowned Scotland's new King, his ambition and murderous rampage begins once again. This can be seen as Macbeth expeditiously orders for Banquo's murder. "It is concluded. Banquo, thy soul's flight, if it find heaven, must find it out tonight." (3. 1. 146-147) This gruesome statement illustrates the desired motivation for the death of Banquo and his son, Fleance. Macbeth is scared of Banquo, as he knows that Banquo's children are heirs to the throne of Scotland. Furthermore, Banquo was present when the witches proclaimed their prophecies, thus meaning Banquo always remains suspicious about Macbeth. As a result of these actions, Macbeth sees Banquo as a threat to himself and the future regime of Scotland. Similarly, another persistent example of ambition is when Macbeth is preparing for the murder of King Duncan. "Shall blow the horrid deed in every eye, that tears shall drown the wind. I have no spur, to prick the sides of my intent," Macbeth exclaims as he is building his confidence, "but only vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itself, and falls on th' other." (1. 7. 25-29) Macbeth is a coward, and constantly contemplates his actions. In this instance, he states that the only thing motivating him is ambition, and the gains of success. Likewise, ambition is seen as an important aspect of human psychology. According to Abraham Maslow, a PhD in psychology, "the most basic needs must be

satisfied before successively higher needs can emerge". This theory is clearly demonstrated as Macbeth slays King Duncan, in order to become King, then proceeds to kill anyone else that is a threat. Lastly, it is indisputable that Macbeth gains confidence and ambition. However, his ambition causes continuous negative psychological deterioration. In correlation, due to his cerebral dysfunction, he begins to lose faith in mankind.

As Macbeth loses his compassionate traits, and diminished mentally; he also loses his trust in humanity. The most discernible example of Macbeth's receding assurance in society is the murder of King Duncan. Well known as a prosperous man and free of corruption, King Duncan is seen as a great leader to Scotland. Macbeth himself indeed states, " Besides, this Duncan hath borne his faculties so meek, hath been so clear in his great office." (1. 7. 17-19) Macbeth greatly exclaims his love for Duncan, and applauds him as a generous King, who does not abuse his powers. He recognizes that Duncan does not deserve to die, but it is necessary for his ambition in order to become King. This clear exposition, establishes the fact that Macbeth recognizes his wrongful actions, however due to the fact that he no longer holds trust in humanity, he is unconcerned about his immoral behavior. Another undeniable pattern, of Macbeth's disoriented faith in humanity is when he initiates the fact that there is no meaning to life. " Life's but a walking shadow," Macbeth acknowledges wistfully, " a poor player that struts and frets his hour upon the stage and then is heard no more." (5. 5. 24-26) In this grievous reference, Macbeth inevitably professes that life is nothing more than an illusion. His words are devoid of any emotion and

meaning. It is perceptible that Macbeth ultimately recognizes the futile life he has attained, and his loss in humankind. In addition, this mindset corresponds with PhD in social philosophy, B. F Skinner who created the theory regarding free will and negative consequences. He stated, “ An individual’s personality is developed through external stimuli.” This demonstrates the clear analogy between Macbeth’s exposures with extraneous activities, and how his personality was able to change and adapt to such negative aspects. Conclusively, it is visible that Macbeth’s actions lead to his dismay in humanity, and furthermore his apathetic behavior toward Lady Macbeth.

Macbeth’s mental breakdown causes the isolation between himself and Lady Macbeth. After the bloodshed of King Duncan, Macbeth no longer seeks encouragement from Lady Macbeth, and they grow apart. With every murder, Lady Macbeth grows insane and drowns in guilt, while Macbeth’s ego grows to an indefinite end. As Macbeth is conversing with the doctor about his troubled wife, he tells the doctor, “ Cure her of that. Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased,” as he is preparing his armor and suiting up for battle, “ pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow, raze out the written troubles of the brain and with some sweet oblivious antidote cleanse the stuffed bosom of that perilous stuff which weighs upon the heart?” (5. 3. 41-47) In this peculiar discussion, Macbeth pays no attention to what the doctor is disclosing, and instead he hastily prompts to prescribe drugs to Lady Macbeth to make her forget her mind and erase her heart. Uncaringly, he even commands the doctor to suit up for battle, being completely oblivious of the fact that his wife is extremely ill. In the same manner, when Lady

Macbeth is announced dead, Macbeth shrugs it off saying, “ She should have died hereafter. There would have been a time for such a word. Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow, creeps in this petty pace from day to day to the last syllable of recorded time.” (5. 5. 17-21) This confession shows just how callous Macbeth has become. He is insensitive to the fact that his own wife has died, and instead remarks that it is no surprise, her death would have come soon anyways. This is a clear exposition of Macbeth’s degrading state of mind, shows how much he has regressed. In summary, it is conspicuous that Macbeth’s mental breakdown has corroded the relationship between him and Lady Macbeth and furthermore, has led to his delusional mentality.

Macbeth has become completely paranoid by the prophecies of the Witches, which has caused him to become delusional, and mentally ill. The Three Witches stated that no man born from a woman, and no army will ever be able to defeat Macbeth. Yet, they mention that the only way Macbeth will be overthrown is if the forest moves up to the Castle. Throughout the entire play, the witches speak in riddles and paradoxes, which bewilder, and deceive Macbeth. Unworried by the tense atmosphere Macbeth expresses, “ Bring me no more reports. Let them fly all. Till Birnam Wood remove to Dunsinane. I cannot taint with fear. What’s the boy Malcolm? Was he not born of woman? The spirits that know, all mortal consequences have pronounced me thus: ‘ Fear not, Macbeth. No man that’s born of woman shall e’er have power upon thee.’” (5. 3. 1-8) This short monologue shows the confidence and courage Macbeth possesses, due to the Witches’ testaments. Macbeth’s weaknesses led him to be deluded, into believing that

he is invincible. The weird sisters constantly deceive Macbeth, by letting him jump to conclusions about their visions, which conclusively led to his mental disintegration. Decisively, when the army has reached Macbeth's castle he bravely recites, " I'll fight till from my bones," he shouts, holding his sword bravely, " my flesh be hacked. Give me my armor." (5. 3. 33-34) At this point in time, Macbeth is seemingly infatuated with the predicaments of the witches and completely is ignorant to the veracity of the situation, as he thinks he is untouchable. However, Macbeth finds out that the prophecies are spellbound and forms of deception, which essentially drive him mad, as he begins to grasp the notion of the weird sisters. Karl L. Kahlbaum, a German psychiatrist stated, " In most paranoid delusions, the individual believes that there is a pattern to random events which is somehow connected him." This theory of paranoid delusions, relates directly to Macbeth and his mindset, as he believes the witches' tributes tie directly to him, and therefore must be true. Finally, it is apparent that Macbeth's delusional and paranoid conscience mislead him into psychological decline.

In conclusion, Macbeth's inherent weaknesses ultimately lead to his destiny and mental depravity. Firstly, his patterns of constant hallucinations and supernatural viewings commence his paranoia to display. Similarly, his ceaseless ambition and selfish motivational approaches caused continuous harm to Macbeth and others around him. Thirdly, Macbeth's diminishing state of mind, subsequently caused him to lose faith in humanity and in continuation obliterate his relationship with Lady Macbeth. Finally, Macbeth's paranoid, and delusional state of mind led to his overall mental deterioration and evidently his annihilation.

Works Cited

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