

The tragedy of macbeth



Shakespeare's Macbeth, Act Scene 7, focuses on the discussion between Macbeth and his wife, Lady Macbeth, as they contemplate their plot to murder Macbeth's friend and King, Duncan. While Macbeth struggles with his conscience over the idea of murdering Duncan, his wife tries to assuage his conscience with her own support of the idea of murdering the King, and in so doing she demonstrates her own callous disregard for the act of murder. Lady Macbeth suffers no guilt at the idea of murdering the King. Her wife's lack of conscience seems lost on Macbeth as he struggles with his own already emerging guilt.

Macbeth's guilt and his words demonstrate that he knows it is an evil act he and his wife have plotted and are talking about in this scene, but having been approached in Act 1, Scene 3 by the Weird Sisters, the three witches, who, before disappearing, give Macbeth their prophecies as to his ascension to the King's throne, Macbeth seems to reconcile himself to the fact that he must murder the King and fulfill the prophecies. The seed of what is to come has been planted in Macbeth's mind, and that it is prophesied by the three witches, in Macbeth's mind, makes it somewhat of a done deed.

It is at this point that Scene 1, Act 1 becomes vitally important, because it is in that scene that the witches meet and talk about their ideas, and upon departing the third witch declares, "Fair is foul, and foul is fair," which sets the stage for the notion that for every action there is a reaction. Though the result of "fair is foul," as it certainly is in the mind of Lady Macbeth in Act 1, Scene 7, there is, too, the end result of what is "foul is fair," which is what Macbeth seems to be concerned about in Act 1, Scene 7, when he says, "False face must hide what the false heart knows." This, as Macbeth resolves himself to what he is about to do to his kind and friend, Duncan, knowing

that it is evil, and his face must not betray what his mind knows lest his evil be detected.

There is a balance in the universe that comes from the concept of the idea that for every action there is a reaction, or a balance. Act 1, Scene 7 prepares us for that which will be the reaction to the couple's murder, in that Macbeth's troubled conscious will manifest itself in a way that brings physical and mental distress to Macbeth. His wife, who denies her conscious in this scene, will suffer equally great physical and mental distresses. Avarice, the basis for the pair's evil, will meet with the balancing reaction of lost goodness. Lost goodness results in deterioration.

The scene and discussion in Act 1, Scene 7 shows, too, that evil begets more evil, in that their plan goes from murdering the king, to implicating the servants, and the fact that the king has heirs to his throne means that greater misdeed must be contemplated, although that's not discussed in this scene. There will be need for further evil to be done by the pair to secure Macbeth's throne.

The question must be asked, would Macbeth, without Lady Macbeth's encouragement, have murdered his friend and king? The answer is yes, because Macbeth, even without his wife's support is convinced, because of the witches' predictions, that he will be king. At this point, that cannot be accomplished without conspiracy and murder.

Lady Macbeth's mind, too, has been cultivated with the idea of her husband becoming king, and seems to accept it as something that must come to pass since it was predicted by the witches.

The scene shows, too, the surrendering of their mortal mind to the supernatural in that Macbeth and his wife allow what has been predicted, but

not yet come to pass, guide their actions. In other words, they do not consider that their actions take a different course, that the prophecies need not be fulfilled, that free will can take a different course.