

The view that the witches are solely responsible for macbeth

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William Shakespeare was born in Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire on the on April 26 1564. He was eldest son in a family of eight children only two older sisters were older than him. Shakespeare was very well educated in a grammar school and as he was the eldest son he would have taken over his fathers business as this was the tradition of the time but instead he broke the tradition and became a school headmaster. He then moved to the British Capital City of London.

William Shakespeare Shakespeare's professional life in London was marked by a number of financially advantageous arrangements that permitted him to share in the profits of his acting company, the Chamberlain's Men, later called the King's Men, and its two theatres, the Globe Theatre and the Blackfriars. His plays were given special presentation at the courts of Elizabeth I and James I more frequently than those of any other contemporary dramatists were.

It is known that he risked losing royal favour only once, in 1599, when his company performed " the play of the deposing and killing of King Richard II" at the request of a group of conspirators against Elizabeth. They were led by Elizabeth's unsuccessful court favourite, Robert Devereux, 2nd Earl of Essex, and by the Earl of Southampton. In the subsequent inquiry, Shakespeare's company was absolved of complicity in the conspiracy. After about 1608, Shakespeare's dramatic production lessened and it seems that he spent more time in Stratford.

There he had established his family in an imposing house called New Place, and had become a leading local citizen. He died on April 23, 1616, and was

buried in the Stratford church. Shakespeare was not very famous when he lived but has become very famous after his death. His work has been appreciated more and for the millennium celebrations he was voted 'Man of the Millennium' for Britain. The society was very different in the middle ages when Shakespeare produced his plays. The patriarchal society gave women little rights.

The women were classed as second class citizens, as they had no work, no independence and belonged to their father or later in life to their husband. This gave the women no rights in the Middle Ages and the males had all the power and most women did not get educated as all the families' money was on concentrating on the eldest son. Her family decided the marriage of the women and a dowry was in place and the women they became the husbands' property. The theatres were also very different. They were massive open-air auditoriums that were unhygienic as there was a great turnout because the people enjoyed the plays to a great extent.

The people sat on the floors, as there were no seats except for the high upper class and it was not uncommon for the audience to show their feelings if the play did not meet their standards. They threw rotten vegetables and shouted the actors off the stage. The girls roles were played by boys and there was no scenery and props used. The actor's script indicated the screen place. The money was mainly spent on costumes for the actors which gave the play the life. People enjoyed the plays because they could be used to criticise people in power, and also the audience enjoyed the words and word games that the writers of the play used.

One of Shakespeare's most famous plays is the story of Macbeth. The story is based upon a true story that occurred in Scotland in 1066. The question I am going to try and answer is 'Discuss the view that the witches are solely responsible for Macbeth's descent into evil'. From the very start of the play the witches are introduced in Act 1 Scene 1. This is to get the audiences attention as they are fascinated by the witches and so they will be kept interested throughout the play. The witches were seen as very evil beings in the middle ages and the thought of them in the play made every part they are in a climax.

The witches in the play use this by arranging evil deeds from the very start to show that will reappear later on in the play. 'When shall we meet again, In thunder, lighting or in rain?' The witches are also extremely intelligent as they know what is happening in the area with the battle and they can see into the future. They are predicating the future so they know that exactly what is going to happen. This is also a sign of evil, as normal or good people cannot predict the future. As a stereotype witches are always know to be evil and mix unimaginary disgusting items together.

Shakespeare uses this to show that the witches are definitely evil. 'Where the place?' 'Upon the heath' 'There to meet Macbeth' At the start of the play Macbeth is a brave and courageous warrior. He has been loyal to his King and Country by defeating the enemy in a vicious battle and he led by example to his army. We can tell of his bravery because 'With his brandished steel, Which smoked with bloody execution'. This means that his sword is fully stained with the bloods of the enemy that he has killed in battle. As far

as Macbeth knows he is doing no wrong as it is his job to kill and he does it, he has no thought on the matter.

This shows that he already has evil in him but it has not been brought out of him to the full extent. King Duncan of Scotland has quickly realised how brave Macbeth was in battle from a captain and is delighted by the news. The victory came in special circumstances as he army that Macbeth was fighting, clearly outnumbered his own. King Duncan thinks that the best way of rewarding Macbeth is by giving him the title of 'Thane of Cawdor'. When Macbeth is walking through the forest with his best friend Banquo he has his first encounter with the three witches'.

At first the two friends do not know what the 'creatures' are and when Macbeth questions them they say: All hail Macbeth! hail to thee, Thane of Glamis! All hail to Macbeth! hail to thee, Thane of Cawdor! All hail to Macbeth! that shalt be king hereafter. These are the three predictions made by the three witches. The first is to make Macbeth believe that they know what they are saying is the truth. The Thane of Glamis is his current title. The second predication is exactly what King Duncan wants him to be. It is a correct predication of what will happen in the future.

The last predication is basically saying that Macbeth will be destroyed but this gets Macbeth interested. Macbeth is now showing signs of evil as in his mind he is worried about what he will have to do to become the King. He knows that the only way he will succeed in his ambition to become king is to kill the current King Duncan. Now Macbeth wants to hear more after is mind

is fascinated with the thought of becoming King. 'Stay, you imperfect speakers, tell me more. By Sinel's death, I know I am Thane of Glamis; But how of Cawdor! the Thane of Cawder lives. '

This is another sign of Macbeth drifting towards the low levels of evil. In the eleventh century, when the play is set it was absolutely unthinkable even seen with a witch and talking to one was seen as even worse. Macbeth thinks that he understands what the witches are saying to him but in reality doesn't so that is why he is asking further questions. In Macbeth's first sentence he says 'tell me more' which indicates that he is finding the evil interesting. The witch's evil is more powerful so they do not answer Macbeth's questions and then vanish. This leaves Macbeth more intrigued by them than before.

Macbeth is wondering if the witches words are evil or not. He is wondering if the witches words are true then why is his body feeling distress after hearing them? This is where Macbeth's mind is straying towards murder. This is the evil inside Macbeth coming out slowly as it is Macbeth who mentions murder and the witches did not mention anything about killing anyone. It is Macbeth who is connecting getting kingship and murder, he leaves the idea of murder only as a fantasy and decides to chance if he will become king or not. I think that the witches were not solely responsible for Macbeth's evil.

The witches were merely used as a catalyst to trigger Macbeth's true identity that he was trying to conceal inside himself. This is because after returning victorious out of so many battles his pride and ego levels must have been running very high so he must have been aiming for the throne. The witches

only inspired him to do as they told him his prophecy, which was correct. The witches only told him what was going to happen, he could have changed it so he would not be lowered into the evil but he sets out activity to try and make it happen although he knows it is wrong.

It is also highly unlikely that a 'loyal soldier' would have had his whole life plans changed with such a brief encounter with three witches as they were the lowest kind of life forms in the middle-ages. Macbeth is awarded the title The Thane of Cawder. Banquo as seen the evil because he knows that only evil witches can make true predications. This is unlike Macbeth who now cannot tell the difference between evil and good. Banquo says: What! can the devil speak true? Banquo has worked out that the devil destroys people the evil tells things which are true. Macbeth is now separated from the good into the devious.

The fact that the Thane of Cawdor before Macbeth was executed because he tries to become King is quite ironic because Macbeth is quoted as saying 'The Thane of Cawdor lives: why do you dress me in borrowed robes?' Is meaning that he had had the idea that he should not take that title because it will cause him problems in the future. The ex Thane of Cawdor was also a brave person says Malcolm. King Duncan had a 'award ceremony' to show that he is a nice person. The King was giving Macbeth the impression that he would like him to become King and he was going to keep rewarding him until he is King.

He made Banquo a noble and the most devastating 'award' for Macbeth went to Duncan's son Malcolm. Malcolm was made the heir to the throne of Scotland. This meant that Macbeth would have to kill at least two people to become King. Duncan and his son Malcolm were in his way. The King is going to visit the castle of Macbeth to show his gratitude. Macbeth is now becoming more and more like a witch in the sense he is always plotting in his mind and using words like the witches would use. Macbeth's wife is also a victim of her husband's success.

She falls to the high levels of pride after thinking of being called a queen if Macbeth is a king and when she hears that King Duncan will be staying only one night at her castle she sees the opportunity, and immediately starts to plot his death. Shakespeare cleverly shows the power women have over men in the character of Lady Macbeth. He shows that a woman can make a man do anything that she wants him to do! Lady Macbeth knows that there is still good inside Macbeth and in order to commit such a dreadful crime such as to murder the king she must remove all traces of good out of his system. Yet do I fear thy nature:

It is too much o' the milk of human kindness To catch the nearest way. Thou wouldst be great; Art not without ambition, but without The illness should attend it This quotation is showing that Lady Macbeth thinks that Macbeth is too kind. 'The illness' is referred to, as he does not have any evil. This could be the turning point in the play as: That I may pour my sprits in thine ear Lady Macbeth is making sprits go into Macbeth to make him turn totally evil. So any good that was in Macbeth will be transformed into evil. When the

messenger has left informing her that Macbeth is on his way her true feelings come out and they are evils ones.

She also makes a potion for herself to fill herself with evil. Lady Macbeth wants her heart to stop running with her body so that she has no feelings expect evil ones and all the time she is constantly plotting of the murder of King Duncan. Lady Macbeth is constantly drilling the idea of killing the King in Macbeth's head and he trying his best to resist. His first argument that why the king should not be killed is because he is the King. In the Middle Ages everyone believed that the King was given his right to be King directly by God. He was Gods representative and he told the people how to live like God would have wanted them to.

The King was a very powerful person. The second argument was that the King was their guest and it is wrong to kill guests. Macbeth also knows the consequences if he is found guilty of the murder. But he will kill the King because that that is his ambition and he is prepared nothing to get in the way of his ambition. He is very determined and that is why he has got so far in life. Macbeth then has another change of mind and tells his wife to forget about the murder. This is the sign of a confused person. This maybe the effects of the evil sprits fighting with the goods sprits inside the mind of Macbeth.

The constant battling of the sprits keep making Macbeth change his mind trapping him in a confused state unable to think straight. Lady Macbeth now starts to employ emotional blackmail onto Macbeth. She tries to put his ego

up by saying he could do anything if he was King, saying he is a wimp if he does not carry out the murder. She then lowers in a false state of consciousness focussing on his strength of determination. She finally persuades the evil deed to go ahead at night. Lady Macbeth had not had the brave courage that she spoke of earlier and Macbeth kills King Duncan.

This is when Macbeth is becoming more and more evil as the evil spirits take over. He even killed two innocent servants to cover up his wrong doings and he blamed them for the deaths, which caused suspicion. Malcolm runs to safety in England and some people suspect him for the murder and Macbeth is the new King of Scotland. Macbeth is worried about the predications that the witches had made about the success of Banquo. Macbeth realises that he will have to commit more murders to keep the position of King. Now that Macbeth is the King he immediately starts to employ spies showing that he will resort to evil methods.

He hires three murders to keep Banquo and Fleance. Banquo is murdered but Fleance escapes. Macbeth is at his coronation banquet and is tormented by the ghost of his best friend Banquo. Only Macbeth can see the ghost and Lady Macbeth lies for him to make the unpleasant looks that Macbeth was giving look good. She lies for him although their marriage is growing further apart and Macbeth is becoming more evil as he does not depend as much on his wife. His wife is now becoming less grateful for the evil deed that she made Macbeth carry out. Macbeth goes to the witches again for further predications and they inform him of his death.

The witch's evils are still kept alive by the use of evil imagery. Scale of dragon, tooth of wolf; Witches' mummy: maw and gulf Of the ravined salt-sea shark Root of hemlock, digged i' th' dark; Liver of blaspheming Jew; Gall of goat, and slips of yew Slivered in the moon's eclipse; Nose of Turk, and Tartar's lips; Finger of birth-strangled babe etc.... There is also detail of what the witch's are putting into their potation like a baboon's blood. The witches are trying to warn Macbeth with the armed head and the forest moving towards the castle predications.

They also say beware of Macduff but he is totally out of reality and so thinks that the witches are giving him warning about good things. Macbeth misunderstands all the predications and thinks that the land can never move so the witches are saying that he is invisible. He is only hearing what he wants to hear showing that he is now arrogant. He decides to kill Macduff and with a raid on Macduff's castle his family is slaughtered, Macduff is in England asking Malcolm to fight Macbeth. In the final act Lady Macbeth brakes down, as she is not clearly suited to a life of evil.

The doctor realises that she is trying to confess in her mind the killings and he is frightened by what he has just heard. Macbeth was clearly unaffected with all the killings, as he is not showing any signs of 'cracking under the pressure' as his wife is. Macbeth sees that the forest is moving and he then remembers what the witches were trying to tell him. He releases that his end is near. The final prophecy is accomplished as Macbeth's head is removed from his body. Even though Macbeth knows that he will be killed in the fight

with Macduff who is also after personal revenge, he still fights him because he was a very brave soldier.

Why should I play the Roman fool, and die On mine own sword? While I see lives, the gashes Do better upon them This is meaning that he is very heroic, as he would rather be killed in a fight than commit suicide. He died in a very noble way, as he knew that he was going to be killed but still he went to Macduff to fight him. The play gives the impression that Lady Macbeth had committed suicide. Now her guilt is driving her to madness whilst sleep, which she herself called 'the season of all natures', is denied to her. This just shows how strong Macbeth's mind must be to be able to cope with all the guilt and fight at the end.