

Comparison of miss havisham and lady macbeth

[Literature](#), [Books](#)



Throughout both 'Great Expectations' and 'Macbeth' surroundings are used to influence and define Miss Havisham's and Lady Macbeth's characteristics. These surroundings are not only physical, but also psychological; found in their relationships and trauma from past events. Although both women are presented in different forms Lady Macbeth is also strongly influenced by her physical surroundings. Like Miss Havisham, her home is metaphorical of her characteristics. She lives in a great castle from which we never see her leave.

Like the castle she first comes across as strong, powerful and intimidating with strong walls, yet we later see these crumble and leave her as nothing but a wreck of what she used to be. The castle also lures King Duncan into a false sense of security the same way Lady Macbeth does, this can be seen when he describes her as 'Fair and noble hostess' and states 'This castle hath a pleasant seat' showing that he feels comfortable and unsuspecting of both. This is ironic because later that very same night he is murdered, highlighting his naivety. This shows how like Lady Macbeth the castle can also conceal the evil within.

Pathetic fallacy is often used in Macbeth to emphasise the atmosphere of the events occurring. For example on the night of Duncan's murder, when Macbeth and Lady Macbeth are in a state of paranoia, 'someone knocks at the gate'. This makes them feel as though they have been discovered by someone and there is almost knocking on their conscience, ultimately leading to Lady Macbeth's loss of sanity. The next morning we learn that 'The night has been unruly' and 'some say the earth/ Was feverous and did

shake' reflecting the earth shaking events of the night prior, and further impressing the guilt on Lady Macbeth, influencing her mental state.

Another influence on Lady Macbeth appears to be the witches. When we are first introduced to her character she appears to be speaking in incantation which mirrors that of the witches: 'Come thick night, And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell' This suggests that the witches have some sort of influence over her, or are possessing her so that she can carry out their wishes of over throwing the King, it also shows that she does not fear the religious consequences of her actions.

She also goes on to call on spirits 'Come, you spirits', this gives the impression that she believes in the superstitious, and not only that but sees it as a source of help. She does not fear it like the vast majority of people in the 1600s. Miss Havisham is also greatly influenced by her psychological and emotional surroundings. The paramount influence over her life was her relationship with Compeyson, as this is what led to her incessant need for revenge, strained relationship with Estella and subversion from conformity.

The enormous impact that Compeyson jilting Miss Havisham had on her perception of love can be seen when she describes love as 'Giving up your soul to the smiter-as I did'. The use of the word smiter emphasises just how deeply she was hurt; her heart was not just broken, but deliberately crushed. She never heals from this pain so dedicates her whole life onwards to breaking men's hearts. She even goes to the extent of raising Estella to do this "You can break his heart. ". Yet she shows signs of regretting bringing Estella up 'so hard and thankless' and robbing her of the ability to love, like Compeyson did to her.

This failing relationship leads her further into depression, but does not stop her need to inflict pain on Pip, suggesting she cannot control her psychological impulses. Miss Havisham's failed relationship led her to rebel from the stereotypical Victorian woman, who is supposed to be a married, dutiful wife, well presented and loving. She is quite the opposite of this as a mad spinster, but is left to her own devices due to her wealth and power. Throughout *Macbeth* we see Lady Macbeth change from a foreboding, deeply ambitious and manipulative woman, to a regretful and guilt-ridden soul.

This change creates a sense of sympathy in the eyes of the audience as it is her own actions which lead to her ultimate demise. Unlike Miss Havisham, Lady Macbeth is married and is perceived by outsiders as a typical loyal wife. However, within her relationship it can be seen that she has also rebelled from expectations. In Lady Macbeth's mind being a woman is a great weakness; she construes femininity as compassion and kindness, preventing her from ever being as powerful as a man.

She labels her husband as "too full o' the milk of human kindness," to commit treason, and for this reason she calls on the spirits to "unsex" her and "Stop up the access and passage to remorse", as she thinks this will allow her to carry out acts of evil. She also manipulates Macbeth into doing what she wants: 'When you durst do it, then you were a man'. This shows that she knows how to use what could be seen as the female method of achieving power, this being manipulation, to further her supposedly male ambitions.

This position of power can again be seen in the use of imperative verbs when she talks to Macbeth: 'look like the innocent flower', 'Leave all the rest to

me', displaying her authority and control over the situation. The play implies that women can be as ambitious and cruel as men, yet social constraints deny them the means to pursue these ambitions on their own. Lady Macbeth's guilt is the crucial psychological surrounding which influences her downfall. Although her will to kill the King was previously so strong, after the murder she begins to slide into madness.

She and Macbeth undergo a role reversal, he seems to lose all sense of remorse, whilst her feminine attributes, which she tried so hard to eradicate, take over, leaving her trapped in her guilt. This ironic turn of events can clearly be seen when Lady Macbeth initially comforts Macbeth by saying " a little water clears us of this deed", yet she soon comes to realise this is not the case. Her guilt consumes even her subconscious mind leading to her sleep walking, whilst in this state she questions " will these hands ne'er be clean? and goes on to recount the events of the day of the murder. This illustrates how she is constantly reliving that day, desperately trying to change what happened but can't. This desperation to clean the blood from her hands eventually drives her insane, and the only way she can free herself from this mental torture is to end her life. Although Great Expectations and Macbeth were written in different centuries and in different forms; Macbeth being a concentrated play, written around 1604, and Great Expectations being a lengthily novel from around 1860.

They were both considered quite outrageous and innovative at the time, due to their previously unspoken themes of madness, superstition and matriarch. As shown in my essay, Miss Havisham and Lady Macbeth are similarly influenced by their surroundings. Both women used people as their puppets

in order to carry out their desires, and both descended into madness through losing their control of their puppets. However Lady Macbeth was power hungry and was willing to take down anyone to satisfy her ambition, whereas Miss Havisham wanted purely revenge, and thought what she was doing was bringing justice.

The former is more manipulative and done purely for selfish reasons, so her madness was self inflicted and grew as time progressed. While the latter was done in response to the pain she was caused, meaning her madness was less calculated, but was constant since the cause of pain. Both are middle aged and wealthy women who have rebelled from expectations, however Miss Havisham rebelled due to a traumatic event in her life and does not try to conceal her atypical lifestyle. Whereas Lady Macbeth tries to mask this, and use her apparent innocence to her advantage.