Themes Of Macbeth Essay, Research Paper

Themes of Macbeth

One of the themes in The Tragedy of Macbeth is that of blood. Macbeth is known for his skills as a warrior and his mercilessness that is shown in his killing of MacDonwald, this warrior mentality spreads though into his life and Macbeth begins to make killing a habit. When he is told in a prophecy that he shall be king, Macbeth takes it upon himself to murder, Duncan, king of Scotland, after this murder though he has visions of blood on his hands, blood nothing could remove. As Macbeth becomes more and more ambitious, he also begins to kill more people to get what he wants, more power. The theme of blood is shown throughout the play and it is a problem that Macbeth finds harder and harder to rid himself of after each killing.

At the beginning of the play Macbeth is an esteemed member of the army, probably the greatest fighter in all of Scotland. A rebellious tribe led by MacDonwald was defeating the Scots, until Macbeth ?single-handedly? defeated the rebels and ?unseamed him (MacDonwald) from the nave to th? chops? (Shakespeare 279). This battle gave Macbeth great respect among his peers and even the king himself. Macbeth?s savagery at this point in the play was less than at any other time. His barbarity is restricted to the battlefield, but in this the first scene you get a forewarning of Macbeth?s future, that of bloodshed and violence.

On his way home from the war, 3 witches give him predictions of his future. ?All hail, Macbeth! Hail to thee, Thane of Glamis! All hail, Macbeth! Hail to thee, Thane of Cawdor! All hail, Macbeth, that shalt be king hereafter? (Shakespeare 290)! Macbeth was already Thane of Glamis, but he wondered why they would say that he would be Thane of Cawdor and even KING. Macbeth dismissed this as tomfoolery and impossible. But, later Macbeth was told by the king that because of his valiant fighting against MacDonwald that he was given the title of Thane of Cawdor. This made Macbeth think of the prophecy and his chance to be king! The desire for power began to consume Macbeth and his wife, and this ambition caused all of the bloody events that were to follow.

Macbeth?s tragic flaw, ambition, grew enormously when he heard of his designation as Thane of Cawdor. He wanted the kingship that Duncan held much more, as did his wife, Lady Macbeth. They plotted to hurry Macbeth?s reign by killing Duncan themselves. Throughout the play his ambition is a precursor for someone?s death. While King Duncan sleeps, Lady Macbeth prepares for her husband to kill the king. Macbeth brutally stabs the king twice, killing him. After the murder, Macbeth is clearly broken, hardly believing what his ambition caused him to do. He says, ?What hands are here? Ha! They pluck out mine eyes! Will all great Neptune?s ocean wash this blood clean from my hand? No; this mine hand will rather the multitudinous seas incarnadine making the green one red? (Shakespeare 320). Macbeth is troubled by knocking and says that nothing can wash his hands clean, and the blood will make the seas red. Lady Macbeth feels bad to have red hands but to be innocent of the crime itself. She tells him to wash his hands and retire and put on his nightgown so that they will not be suspicious to the watchers. Macbeth wishes he did not know what he had done.

The blood on his hands shows that his hands are ?stained with guilt?, that nothing could be done to change what he did. His guilty conscience is represented by the fact that he will always see his blood covered hands. But instead of this act restraining Macbeth and keeping him from killing again, it causes his ambition to grow and the murders to grow. In the morning when it is found that Duncan was dead, and the evidence Macbeth left shows that the chamberlains killed him. In a false sense of fury Macbeth butchers the chamberlains saying that he did so because in his great love for the king, he felt the need to kill his murderers. The death toll begins to mount as Macbeth?s ardor makes him believe that killing is the way out of all his dilemmas. This will eventually cause his own downfall.

Macbeth?s next assassination comes at the hand of his friend Banquo and his son Fleance. Macbeth?s ambition and power has caused him to develop a grave sense of paranoia. A paranoia that actually leads to all the rest of his murders including that of the chamberlains. He is so worried that someone might find him out that he kills anyone that could challenge him even in the slightest way. It is actually quite surprising to me that he never tries to kill his wife, because with her insane behavior, she must have been a challenge to his throne.

The paranoia that sets in which causes him to attempt a murder upon Banquo and Fleance is twofold. Firstly, the witches that predicted his kingship also said that Banquo?s descendants would take the throne, which he holds, and secondly that he had mentioned to Banquo that he might attempt to kill Duncan. So Macbeth sends out two murderers to kill Banquo and Fleance. The third murderer has a questioned identity; some think it was Macbeth himself while others assume it is another hired hand. In short terms the murderers kill Banquo, but young Fleance escapes.

In the next scene, that of a banquet that was to honor Banquo, Macbeth sees his friends ghost. The ghost of Banquo was bloodied and looked horrible. It is another example of Macbeth feeling the guilt of his murder but this time the bloody theme is shown in a different manner. He says to the ghost ?Avaunt and quit my sight! Let the earth hide thee! Thy bones are marrowless, thy blood is cold; Thou hast no speculation in those eyes which thou dost glare with (Shakespeare 321). At another point he says ?Never shake thy gory locks at me?(Shakespeare 289). Macbeth again is having visions of the gore that he has caused. He can not shake the guilt from himself and throughout the play the blood represents his guilt and all the death his ambition has caused.

The bloodshed in the play does not stop at that point though. In another set of predictions the witches inform Macbeth to ?Beware Macduff.? Macbeth?s extreme sense of Paranoia sets in, and he sends another set of murderers to kill Macduff at his home. The murderer finds that Macduff has fled Scotland to try and convince Malcolm and England to fight Macbeth. The murderer takes it upon himself to kill Macduff?s son. Macduff, enraged finally makes Macbeth pay for his mindless aggression.

Macbeth is left to defend his castle alone against Macduff and Malcolm. Before this happens though, Macbeth considers ending his own pain and guilt by drawing his own blood, he says ?Why should I play the Roman fool and die on mine own sword? Whiles I see lives, the gashes do better upon them?( Shakespeare 272). He goes on to tell Macduff that he feels no pain in killing him because the guilt of his soul is already stained with his blood, for he had ordered his family to be killed. Macduff then calls Macbeth as a bloodier villain than any word could describe. Macbeth tells Macduff that his blood cannot be shed by anyone that was born of a woman.

All these quotes lead back to the theme of bloodiness. They concentrate on how their lives our sealed by blood the material that keeps them going. They never talk about killing; they talk about the loss of a man?s blood. So if Macbeth?s soul was stained with blood, it was clear how his lifeended. He could not avoid this metaphor throughout the play, how he caused so many peoples blood shed, that it is his blood in the end which is drawn by Macduff that kills him.

The Tragedy of Macbeth is a story that has been told and acted for hundreds of years. It was one of the first works that had murder as the basis for its plot. Shakespeare has been dissected by many great scholars and taught to millions of people. It has taught the lesson that ambition can become a fault. Macbeth?s ambition causes him to do many things he would not otherwise have done, a fault many of us have; he just took it to the extreme. The blood that stained Macbeth reminded him of all the wrongdoing he had done. The blood represented the errors in his ways. Blood represents life, and when you are bleeding in such a way that the sea could not soak up your blood you are a man destined to die. The blood represented the life death and purgatory of the great Macbeth.

In today’s society, greed, jealousy, and envy is the root of all evil and I believed that this was true in this story along with the theme of blood which represents guilt. Scott Eckers belived in this also. “Because of greed, Macbeth (and Lady Macbeth) want more power — that of the Royal Family. Greed for power has completely engulfed their minds?.” (Eckers). This, I believe, is a part of what led to the downfall of Macbeth along with the “stained with guilt” hands that where covered with blood (Shakespeare 283). In the 1999, many t.v. murder movies have a guilt theme to them, although some are just for entertainment.

In 1995, a woman named Susan Smith killed her two children because she couldn?t handle taking care of them. On one dreadful night she took her children out driving and parked near a lake. She got out saying she had to tinkle and left the car in neutral. While getting out she pushed the car into the lake. She walked to the nearest town and said someone robbed her and took her kids. While the investegation was going on, she had an emotional breakdown. She felt a lot of guilt on her heart. She eventually told the police what actually happened and was sent to jail and is awaiting death row (Stoccs).

Guilt plays a part in all our lives in what we do. When we lie we sometimes think about the consequences. The guilt makes people feel so overpowered they can’t survive without getting rid of their guilty conscience. This is what drives people insane and how many people end up in the nut-house.

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