

‘Symbols of Bird, Blood, and Sleep in William Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*’

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Abstract: *This paper attempts to explain the 'Symbols of Bird, Blood, and Sleep' in Shakespeare's Macbeth. The brief arrival of a trio of witches' (sorceress) precognition leads Macbeth with his psychological consequences of irrepressible ambition to vanquish the desired realm by slaughter king Duncan. Shakespeare projected the deep-seated opinions of human beings as well as their values according to the situations, with the comparison of the different symbols. For example, with the restless ecstasy, sleep symbolizes innocence and purity and blood symbolizes murder and guilt, and the bird epitomizes both the superstitious aspect of negativity and evil power. In Shakespeare's Macbeth, symbols play a significant role, as these symbols have been intertwined across the various characters and have been used in several ways to connect the general theme of murder to the action in the play of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth.*

Keywords: *Symbols, Bird, Sleep, Blood, Guilt, and Paranoia.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The tragedies of Shakespeare are the mirror of human's latent impulses, where a powerful character would have deep-seated aspirations to become insatiable which can cause them beyond the standards of human acts. Hamlet, Macbeth, Othello, King Lear are all renowned as Shakespeare's great tragic plays. The play begins with a mood of uncertainty and mystery. For instance The prattle between three witches with thunder and lightning. With different symbols of a tragic flaw, the play takes place. Birds were projected as superstitious elements, while blood symbolizes remorse and paranoia, as well as sleep, reflected with peace and innocence.

II. LITERATURE SURVEY

The symbols of bird, blood, and sleep echo across William Shakespeare's Macbeth and are also characterized by refinement, variety, and imagination. In Macbeth, the images and symbols are sumptuous and reliable. There are many questions like, Why Shakespeare had been compared and contrasted the characters with various symbols in the play Macbeth? Is there any relation between symbols for the death of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth? Why the main characters were haunted by terrific symbols of assassination? With the above elucidation, I am trying to analyze one of William Shakespeare's works as an object of my paper. The main focus of this paper refers to the symbols of how Shakespeare had portrayed the tragic flaw of Macbeth, with various elements throughout the play. This paper is trying to convey how symbols had been delineated by the various characters. How the Symbols of Bird, Blood, and Sleep, deals with particular characters through the strong presumption of remorse and paranoia? Therefore, this paper is going to focus on how Macbeth's Symbols raises several questions as follows

1. What is the meaning of Symbols in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*?
2. How the characters had been disturbed by the various symbols?
3. Why Macbeth and Lady Macbeth imagined different kinds of Symbols?

The main objective of this paper is to define guilt and obsession and this writing is also expected to be useful in providing information about symbols of remorse and obsession in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. It can be supplementary for results of literary research on English literature in general and English play particularly. Besides, I hope, this paper can become the guidance in bailing a lot of educative life experience to wise in dealing with problems.

III. METHODOLOGY

The main focus of this paper is to explain the symbols of the "Bird, Blood and Sleep" which is related to the particular characters in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. The limitations of the discussion illustrated the characterization of structural elements of symbols in the play, by focusing on these elements of the symbols. While we are reading this play we can improve the way of evaluating it, to get a deep understanding. The collection of the data, related to the objectives of this paper is from two sources; Primary data is directly collected from the original text of Shakespeare's play *Macbeth* edited by Barbara A Mowat and Paul Werstine, New York, and Secondary data is from the literature review. Moreover, this writing includes descriptive, interpretative, discourse analysis on "Macbeth", which involves reading, understanding, and presenting the meaning by interpreting the data.

IV. DISCUSSION

The paper is going to represent the discussion of Bird, Blood, and Sleep.

Bird

Throughout the tragedy, *Macbeth* Shakespeare uses Symbols and Images to create a picture through related dialogues. The symbols were used as the instrumentals in creating the tone of the play. The bird is an effective and brilliant symbol that had been utilized by Shakespeare. About birds tweeted in "A cinematic reimagining of Shakespeare's tragedy". Performed by Starring Mark Rowley & Akiya Henry; directed by @kit_monkman.

Birds make frequent and often noisy, appearances in *Macbeth*. There are sparrows, eagles, ravens, martlets, owls, falcons, crows, kites, maggot-pies, choughs, rooks. They croak, breed, haunt, shriek, scream, clamor, tower, hawk, kill, wing, rouse, flight, swoop, and, in the case of a little 'howlet' missing its wing, provide an ingredient 'for a charm of 'powerful trouble' brewed by the weird sisters. But these birds haven't always been understood in the same way, and so we might overlook some of their intended implications in the play if we are not careful. [2]

Lady Macbeth

(Reading the letter)

(Reading the letter) "They met me in the day of success, and I have learned by the perfectest the report they have more in them than mortal knowledge.

When I burned in desire to question them further, they made themselves air, into which they vanished.

Whiles I stood rapt in the wonder of it came missives
from the King, who all-hailed me “Thane of Cawdor,”
by which title, before, these Weird Sisters saluted me
and referred me to the coming on of time with “Hail,
king that shalt be.” This have I thought good to deliver
thee, my dearest partner of greatness, that thou
might'st not lose the dues of rejoicing by being ignorant
of what greatness is promised thee. Lay it to thy
heart, and farewell .”(Mac.1.5.1-14)[1]

After Lady Macbeth discovered witches' prophecies in a letter consigned by Macbeth and acquired word from a messenger that the King himself is coming to stay, she begins to ponder about murder. This can be identified when she states.

Lady Macbeth

“The raven himself is hoarse
That croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan
Under my battlements” (Mac.1.4.45-47) [1]

The raven, a bird that is entirely black and sinister, is usually represented as a symbol of negativity or evil force. So Shakespeare adopted this portrayal of the raven in this quotation as well as he was prognosticating the vile action that Lady Macbeth and her husband were about to carry out. The raven made the deeds unavoidable.

Leah Fessler explained the elements of the bird with the comparison of Macbeth in her academic writings “From virtue to villain, eagle to hell-kite: Macbeth’s disruption of nature as represented by birds”.

“Where Macbeth is first characterized as an eagle, the noblest bird referenced in *Macbeth*, after repeatedly disturbing his society’s natural order Macbeth is ultimately represented by a “hell-kite,” a rapacious bird of prey of infernal breed” [3]

Macbeth

“If charnel houses and our graves must send
Those that we bury back, our monuments
Shall be the maws of kites” (Mac.3.4.83-85) [1]

If the dead people start to come out from the proper burial grave as a ghost to torture their murderers, as carrion birds eat the flesh of the dead body from the grave. It shows that murderers can't escape from their deeds of negativity.

Second Witch

Fillet of a fenny snake
In the cauldron boil and bake.
Eye of newt and toe of frog,
Wool of bat and tongue of dog,” (Mac.4.1.12-15) [1]

Shakespeare is trying to illustrate the power of evil influence by projecting the supernatural ideas which have been followed by the people through the indication of witches. (Wings of a young owl)

Son: As birds do, mother.
L.Macduff: What, with worms and flies?
Son: With what I get, I mean; and so do they.
L.Macduff: Poor bird, thou 'dst never fear the net nor lime,
The pitfall nor the gin. (Mac.4.2.37-41) [1]

Macbeth entrapped the whole family of Macduff, here Lady Macduff compares her son to a poor bird (Pigeon) normally poor bird doesn't attack other birds and is never scared of the danger of the net.

Blood

Blood was the two faces of the same coin in *Macbeth*, which had been portrayed as guilty and greedy. The three witches introducing themselves by killing a pig, here, pig blood is a symbol of evil power, which is the indication of negativity (darkness) this was affected by the main characters. When Macbeth murdered the saintly king Duncan, once his hand blot with the blood he was guilty and paranoid. This incident leads the characters to scare the blood as a symbol throughout the play. According to A C Bradley in his *Shakespearean Tragedy: Lectures on Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, and Macbeth* (336)

“Lady Macbeth, gazing at hers, and stretching it away from her face to escape the smell of blood that all the perfumes of Arabia will not subdue! The most horrible lines in the whole tragedy are those of her shuddering cry, 'Yet who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him?' And it is not only at such moments that these images occur”. (pp. 336) [4]

Macbeth
“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 my hand will rather
The multitudinous seas incarnadine,
Making the green one red”. (Mac.2.2.77-81) [1]

This was the beginning stage when he started feeling guilty as terrific action. Also, blood had been symbolized as Macbeth's deep-seated remorse after the assassination.

Lennox
“Those of his chamber, as it seemed, had done 't.
Their hands and faces were all badged with blood.
So were their daggers, which unwiped we found
Upon their pillows.”(Mac.2.3.19-21) [1]

Through the character of Lennox, Shakespeare had sowed the seeds of suspicion in the minds of the character of this play.

Macbeth

Thou canst not say I did it. Never shake
Thy gory locks at me". (Mac.3.4.61-62) [1]

Here blood is a weapon for the suspicion of the people around Macbeth and these lines are reflecting the traumatic condition of insecurity after the assassination of *Macbeth*.

Macduff

"Bleed, bleed, poor country!
Great tyranny, lay thou thy basis sure,
For goodness dare not check thee. Wear thou thy
wrongs;(Mac.4.3.39-42) [1]

Through blood and the dialogue of Macduff, Shakespeare tries to portray the victory of deceiving and the fruits of the crime and how good people were not able to oppose the fake of king Macbeth

Lady Macbeth

"Come, you spirits
That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,
And fill me from the crown to the toe top-full
Of direst cruelty. Make thick my blood".(Mac.1.5.47-50) [1]

Through this strong negative character, by using the symbol of blood, Shakespeare was indicating her intended transformation from human to inhuman by getting the thickness of the blood.

Sleep

Through the various characters, Shakespeare cleverly portrayed the sequence by using sleep as a major tool for this tragedy like how Lady Macbeth's character had been introduced through the most influential dialogues which was an apocalypse in nature and which was an indication of the death of the Duncan.

Macbeth

Thus to mine eyes. Now o'er the one-half world
Nature seems dead and wicked dreams abuse
The curtained sleep. Witchcraft celebrates
Pale Hecate's off'rings, and withered murder, (Mac.2.1.61-64) [1]

From the above lines, Shakespeare is describing that force will act spontaneously when the world moves for sleep. Through the geographical pre-notion.

Lady Macbeth

That which hath made them drunk hath made me

bold. What hath quenched them hath given me fire.
Hark!—Peace.
It was the owl that shrieked, the fatal bellman,
Which gives the stern’ st good-night. He is about it.
The doors are open, and the surfeited grooms
Do mock their charge with snores. I have drugged
their possets,
That death and nature do contend about them
Whether they live or die. (Mac.2.2.1-11) [1]

These lines are reflecting the power of stimulating something which can move beyond the human expectations of the surrounding for the assassination through the lens of the pre-plan. For instance how Lady Macbeth made them dump between death and sleep.

Macbeth
There’s one did laugh in ’s sleep, and one cried
“Murder!”
That they did wake each other. I stood and heard
them.
But they did say their prayers and addressed them
Again to sleep. (Mac.2.2.30-35) [1]

This conversation was a glimpse of the disturbed mindset of Macbeth as well as lady Macbeth within themselves. For a hint, here both of them are destroying their sleep by letting others sleep for their wickedness.

Macbeth
Still it cried “Sleep no more!” to all the house.
“Glamis hath murdered sleep, and therefore
Cawdor
Shall sleep no more. Macbeth shall sleep no more.” (Mac.2.3.54-57) [1]

This is the most influential dialogue through the concrete symbol of sleep; because, how Macbeth had been affected by the same weapon of sleep after destroying the king’s sleep completely. Here Shakespeare indicates that how he started feeling guilty. (Psychological disturbance which was deep-seated within him)

Macduff
“Was it so late, friend, ere you went to bed
That you do lie so late?” (Mac.2.3.22-23) [1]

Shakespeare had awakened the particular characters to symbolize the sleep as an optional for the martyrs. Here how Macduff had awakened for getting the hint of evil force but enquiring the porters.

Exeunt Macbeth and Lennox
“Awake, awake!

Ring the alarum bell.—Murder and treason!
Banquo and Donalbain, Malcolm, awake!
Shake off this downy sleep, death's counterfeit,
And look on death itself. Up, up, and see
The great doom's image. Malcolm, Banquo,
As from your graves rise up and walk like sprites
To countenance this horror.—Ring the bell". (Mac.2.3.124)

Macbeth

Better be with the dead,
Whom we, to gain our peace, have sent to peace,
Than on the torture of the mind to lie
In restless ecstasy. Duncan is in his grave.
After life's fitful fever he sleeps well.
Treason has done his worst; nor steel nor poison,
Malice domestic, foreign levy, nothing
Can touch him further. (Mac.3.2.22-29) [1]

Here we can understand the ultimate realization of a strong man after his sin. Macbeth realized that how he had lost his peaceful sleep by spoiling Duncan's sleep permanently and had sent him to the permanent deep sleep in the grave.

Doctor

I have two nights watched with you
but can perceive no truth in your report. When was it she
last walked? (Mac.5.1.1-3) [1]

With these two lines, Shakespeare realizes that no medicine can cure the malfeasance of a human if they have done it for the other human. Also, wickedness cannot go across morality.

Malcolm

"Cousins, I hope the days are near at hand
That chambers will be safe." (Mac.5.4.1-2) [1]

Shakespeare, with all these evil forces, had illustrated the positive vibe which has hope for the best with the hidden victory of getting the peaceful sleep of the citizen.

Lady Macbeth

"Here's the smell of the blood still. All
the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little
hand. O, O, O!" (Mac.5.1.53-55) [1]

Through the sleepwalking scene of Lady Macbeth Shakespeare has used sleep as a strong weapon for this tragedy. Also, nobody can escape from their deeds as well as their deep sleep. Here this lady, the one who has been portrayed as a fourth witch by the power of her wickedness and how she had dumped herself in the lifetime half death.

James Wells described the interconnection between the symbol of sleep in the character of Lady Macbeth in his critical essay “To be thus is nothing”: Macbeth and the trials of dramatic identity”

From her first “Come ye spirits which tend on mortal thoughts,”

Lady Macbeth’s existence has been predicated on her willingness to let herself be displaced by forces outside herself. Instead of

nullifying her, the sleepwalking scene realizes the self Lady Macbeth

has been asking to be all along. (pp.236)[5]

CONCLUSION

In this play, Shakespeare draws Macbeth’s character towards his fatal ends. He will ignore fate, deride death, and built up hopes beyond the limits of wisdom, honor, and fear. Fear has been intertwined through the various aspects of the different characters. In the play, *Macbeth*, the murder of Duncan is related to revenge because first, he had decided to give kingship to Macbeth but, when Macbeth had a victory on the battlefield Duncan had changed the decision. So the revenge and guilt both were interconnected throughout the play with so many characterizations. Mainly, greediness was not the intention of Macbeth but after hearing the words of witches and Lady Macbeth, he started having that over-ambition for power. Even without his knowledge, he has surrendered himself to the tragic path. Sleep is also the symbol of innocence, peace as well as a weapon for the assassination. For instance, Duncan’s sleep represents his innocence, Macbeth’s and Lady Macbeth’s remorse reflects their disturbed psychological condition when they had lost their peace of life and how they had been used sleep as a strong weapon to kill king Duncan. After the assassination even though they conquered what they aspire for, they have lost their sleep as well as their life by granting Duncan the permanent deep sleep. In the play *Macbeth*, Shakespeare had projected the power of negativity as well as positivity within the same personality according to the circumstances with the various influential elements.

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