
LADY MACBETH AND THE WITCHES

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THE FOURTH WITCH

- There are blatant parallels between Lady Macbeth and the Witches throughout the play
 - Witchcraft is the antithesis (direct opposite) of kingship. Kingship requires care for the kingdom as a whole and a strong moral compass.
 - Lady Macbeth is the antithesis of an ideal woman
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INVOCATION AND GREETING

- Lady Macbeth calls on evil forces to fill her heart with cruelty
 - This would be seen as a direct link with the witches and witchcraft
 - Her connection to the witches is seen in the way she greets Macbeth: 'Great Glamis, worthy Cawdor / Greater than both by the all hail hereafter'
 - The witches greeted him thus: '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!'
 - Lady Macbeth never meets the witches, so her connection with them is startling
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SLIGHTLY MORE OBSCURE CONNECTION...

- Refers to the chamberlains as 'in swinish sleep'
 - Witches were linked to killing swine / swine flu
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LIMITED POWERS, LIKE THE WITCHES

- Context-specific reference to the sailor whose wife refused to give chestnuts to the witch is interesting. They could not kill the sailor, but they could create a storm which affected his ship.
 - How you view this story depends on how influential you think Lady M is in her husband's downfall.
 - Lady M cannot kill Duncan, just as the witches cannot directly kill a person
 - They are a 'psychological poison' to threaten the soul
 - They mislead Macbeth into a false sense of security
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WHY WITCHCRAFT?

- Kingship was a male rule
 - Kingship was divinely ordained
 - Kingship promoted order of the universe
 - Witchcraft is female rule
 - Witchcraft is ordained by the devil
 - Witchcraft destroys the system of order and promotes chaos
 - Powerful idea of conflict and contrast
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PLOT DEVICE

- If the witches appeared too often, they would lose their power
 - Suspension of disbelief is important
 - Witches cannot have too much influence
 - Lady Macbeth subtly reminds us of the witches
 - Witches or Lady M appear in Scenes 1,3 and 5 of the 1st act.
 - Even numbered scenes are male-dominated
 - This establishes contrast between good and evil, male and female, order and chaos
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WOMANHOOD

- Lady Macbeth also contrasts with notion of perfect womanhood
 - 'Unsex me here...'
 - As she discards her feminine traits, she becomes similar to the witches
 - Perverted femininity created by this ambiguity of gender
 - Abhorrent to audience
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MOTHERHOOD

- Also important
 - Totally unnatural to want to kill your child
 - She is like the witches who use the finger of a murdered baby in their potion
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LADY MACBETH - FINAL WORD

- Insidious and manipulative
 - Corrupt
 - Connected to witchcraft
 - Evil
 - Defies the divine
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