



Psychological Stress due to Fear in Macbeth

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In early modern literature on passions and medicine, fears were considered to be instigators of disease or at least health effects. A famous passage by Robert Burton, in "The Anatomy of Melancholy" (1621), claims that fear is often a cause of sudden madness, as well as almost all types of disease. As Francis Bacon argues in "Of Regimen of Health" (1625), good health requires one to avoid "envy, anxious fears, and anger, worrying inwards, subtle and knotty inquisitions". A host of disorders were caused by fear, which degenerated an individual's psychological and physiological states. It is considered dangerous to disturb a well-balanced humoral complexion for it might even result in death. Fear and infectious anxiety, are prevalent throughout Macbeth, and although many passions haunt the play's main characters, fear is the driving force of the play.

Shakespeare is not really interested in literal physical diseases. In contrast, Macbeth is a play that is preoccupied with illness, disease, and biological collapse. It depicts and plays the symptomatic process of dread causing illness and death. The play is both about fear and is consumed by fear. But Macbeth did more than just portray dread as a disease; it also showed spectators how contagious fear can be. Early modern productions of Macbeth both reproduced the physiological consequences of dread and conjured similar effects in Renaissance playgoers, anticipating audiences who feared fear itself.

Fear plays a significant role in Shakespeare's play (1606) "Macbeth" as it follows Macbeth and Lady Macbeth's rise to power and eventual downfall. The topic of fear changed Lady Macbeth's perspective from one of a fearless woman to one of paranoia and lastly to one of fear of herself. The drama opens with Lady Macbeth as a brave character. She loses sight of the seriousness of her acts because she is so determined to succeed as queen. To assassinate Duncan and blame the servants is Lady Macbeth's strategy. Macbeth returns to his wife after killing King Duncan, holding the blood-stained dagger in his bloody hands. She instructs him to go back and give the daggers to the King's guards. But the terror of what he has done has paralysed Macbeth. "I won't go any further", he declares, "I'm terrified to think what I have done; I dare not look on it again" (Macbeth 2.2.20). Due to this, Lady Macbeth disregards her husband. He surrenders the daggers to her, and she informs him that it is silly to be terrified of the dead or the sleeping. Macbeth was afraid of being caught and paying for the wrongs he had done, which led to the murders. Macbeth's actions are also motivated by fear of the witch's prophecies, Macbeth fears that they will come true and tries to prevent them from happening. Looking through the development of the plot, the final outcome of the play is greatly influenced by fear and also inspired by this particular feeling that can overpower and control human nature. After Duncan's death, Macbeth's subsequent murders were committed out of fear and insecurity of his position as King of Scotland. When Duncan was killed, Macbeth immediately killed two sleeping guards.

As for Macbeth, he just killed the king of Scotland and blamed it on his son. It works and he becomes king, but he remembers the prophecies of the witches. They declared that Macbeth would be king, but that Banquo's children would follow in his footsteps. This made Macbeth very angry, he risked everything to become king and after he had no family members he would follow.

He justifies himself by saying: "Who can respect, who has love, and in that heart has the courage to let his love be known?" (Macbeth 2.3.25). Out of fear and thoughtlessness, Macbeth killed Duncan's guards to deprive himself with his amplified narration of bravery, leading to growing suspicion of Macbeth's true intentions in the incident. His fear of being arrested and blamed for Duncan's death only increases his fear of Banquo, who is beginning to question the justice behind Macbeth's new identity. As in the witches prophecy, Banquo was destined from generation to generation of Scottish kings. This led to his involvement in the murder of Banquo, where Macbeth's cautious demeanour declared that committing the crime a second time would further strengthen his role as king. His vigilance has led him to the desire to assassinate Macduff and thus his family. As a result, fear led to many of Macbeth's murders, which then further resulted in his downfall.

Macbeth begins doing anything that would give him an advantage in the decisive fight because of an increased concern of losing the next conflict with England. Macbeth's sorrow over what he is doing is destroying him, and his terror is starting to overtake him. He is unable to sleep anymore. Also, Lady Macbeth is filled with fear and guilt, she is slowly losing her sanity. That is because she cannot deal with what she did to Duncan. She is trying to wash away what she considers to be blood on her hands. Also, she mentions hell, an obvious fear of having to go there for what she has done. However, as the play progresses, Lady Macbeth loses strength as Macbeth gains it, and as a result, Macbeth is less bothered by what he has

done than Lady Macbeth is. At first, Lady Macbeth was the one who pushed Macbeth to kill Duncan. Later, she sleepwalks in her room, and “rubs her hands” (Macbeth 5.1.58) for “a quarter of an hour” (Macbeth 5.1.58) while lamenting the fact that “these hands never be clean” (Macbeth 5.1.59). “All the Arabian scents won’t be able to make this little hand \more palatable, she can still smell the blood” (Macbeth 5.1.59). Lady Macbeth died shortly before the start of the battle with the British. Her part in the performance gradually shrinks as she eventually goes insane from the guilt and can no longer handle it. She dies in the hopes that her suffering will end now that she is gone. Her death shows how fearful she was and ultimately what fear can do to a person.

The situation of Macbeth at the conclusion of the first act and the beginning of the second act is very much the start of the disastrous crimes. Act One’s setup and building tension depict a Macbeth whose ego restrains his ambition and morality. Due to the unconscious influence of his Superego, he has a strong sense of loyalty, but his aggressive courage and perhaps, in a certain light, his primitive battling in combat also give us the impression that his Id is just as stable as the Superego. In short, Macbeth’s mental health was good and he was a hero in the beginning of the play (Macbeth).

However, this does not last long, the witches’ interference, or the outside supernatural forces that stir the dormant potential of the Id to the surface, are responsible for the play’s “foul” element. Even after it appears that Superego has satisfied the original need for power, Lady Macbeth, a more powerful Id, joins the scene and essentially takes control. After the first sign of Macbeth’s descent into “the dark”, we discover a character who feels compelled to follow his Id rather than the Superego. The latter, after a few guilt-induced hallucinations, essentially disappears and lets Macbeth continue on his anti-heroic path.

We have sympathy for Macbeth regardless of his fate. He is the protagonist, and glimpses of guilt give us hope that redemption is possible for him. Shakespeare has to allow his audience to see beyond blind evil, he must allow them to see Macbeth’s good, moral aspects. This would make him more credible as the protagonist. He must give Macbeth a sense of guilt to his role in the play.

It is dynamic to apply psychoanalytical theory, which holds that the unconscious mind is motivated by male primordial instinct, in order to properly comprehend the psychology of

Lady Macbeth. A woman’s wrath, desire to control, the Superego, and the Ego, which mediates between these two, are Freud’s three drives regulated by the Id, a part of the unconscious mind. Lady Macbeth is an example of this personality. The best psychoanalysis to uncover the causes of Lady Macbeth’s transformation is this kind. Lady Macbeth is the more powerful character at the play’s beginning, forcing her husband to take action. But as she eventually breaks down first, her demeanour changes.

When Macbeth and Lady Macbeth decided to kill King Duncan and assumed the throne of Scotland, their true identities emerged. After becoming King of Scotland, Macbeth ordered the assassination of Banquo and the Macduff family. People’s egos will surface if they can control their id. When Macbeth experienced fear, his ego surfaced. It was evident that Macbeth was regretful of assassinating King Duncan. When something was valuable, the super-ego emerged. Macbeth’s inflated self may be witnessed when Lady Macbeth forced him to kill King Duncan despite his reservations. When Scotland was attacked by Birnam

Woods, The Destruction or Catastrophe of Macbeth became apparent. Immorality cannot exist without morality. Darkness cannot exist without light, and vice versa. When one or the other does not exist, there can not be a concept of the opposite. There are only absolutes without. Even though we might favour the Superego above the Id, neither is necessary for the existence of mankind or free choice. Shakespeare needed Macbeth, the over-the-top hero, to show how to pursue ambition, as corny as that may sound. Shakespeare produces one of the most remarkable examples of human reflection through this wonderful character development.

In Macbeth, fear functioned as the primary motivating force, and in the end, it had an impact on how the play turned out. All of Macbeth’s deeds were motivated by fear, both of being discovered and of the witches’ prophecies. He attempted to stop them at all costs out of fear that they might actually be true.

The predictions of the witches are Macbeth’s principal source of fear. The witches’ initial prophecy that Macbeth would succeed as king drove him to kill Duncan, and with each successive vision, Macbeth descends beyond and more into a wicked spiral. Macbeth learned more information from the witches when he returned.

After killing the monarch, the main character (Macbeth) of the play hears someone yell, as he exits Duncan’s chamber. In addition to Lady Macbeth’s tendency to sleepwalking, Macbeth suffers from chronic sleeplessness. Macbeth develops a growing paranoia that his wrongdoings will be discovered as the play goes on. Macbeth’s old friend Banquo, whose murder he has ordered, comes to haunt him as a metaphor for his sinful conscience.

In the play’s last scene, Macbeth brags to Macduff, “I bear a charmed life, which must not yield, / To one of woman born” (Macbeth 5.8.67).

Macduff answers,

“Despair thy charm; And let the angel whom thou still hast served Tell thee, Macduff was from his mother’s womb Untimely ripp’d” (Macbeth 5.8.67)

When Macbeth hears this, he curses Macduff for what he has spoken. Following his admission of fear, Macbeth swears vengeance on the

liars and promises Macduff that he won't attack him. But Macduff doesn't really offer him an option. He claims,

"Then yield thee, coward, / And live to be the show and gaze o' the time" (Macbeth 5.8.68)

In other words, if Macbeth doesn't fight, he'll be taken captive and carried around by the tyrant's followers for them to mock. When faced with this option, Macbeth decides to fight.

Despite the difficulties he faces throughout the play, Macbeth consistently tries to be a good husband. Macbeth decides against his own preferences because of fear of being a bad husband. One instance is this line from Macbeth:

"I am settled and bend up Each corporal agent to this terrible feat. Away, and mock the time with the fairest show, False face must hide what the false heart doth know." (Macbeth 1.7.16)

Although fear is felt in the mind, it also causes a powerful physical response in the body. Like when Macbeth undergoes insomnia and paranoia. After killing the King Duncan, he hears someone yell, "Sleep no more! Macbeth doth murder sleep" (Macbeth 2.2.20) as he exits King Duncan's chamber. Macbeth suffers from chronic sleeplessness, he also develops a growing paranoia as the play goes on when he ordered to kill Banquo, who comes to haunt him as an image of his sinful conscience.

"Thou canst not say I did it. Never shake thy gory locks at me" (Macbeth 2.4.37).

This quote shows how Macbeth's self-assurance is starting to disappear. He is beginning to experience self-guilt as is his wife. While her husband shouts at the invisible ghost, Lady Macbeth tries to shield her husband from the difficulty, but even she finds it difficult to control. They appeared to be able to get away with murdering the monarch in Act 2 of the play (Macbeth). Macbeth is now making a show of himself as his conscience starts to drive him insane.

Shakespeare wrote Macbeth in the 1600s, and the Macbeth figure is still well-known today. The main reason Macbeth is important even today in our culture is that it explores the concept of corruption and illustrates how easily one may be misled by ambition and end up in fear. And through Lady Macbeth's manipulation of Macbeth, she is also responsible for the king's murder. She tries to wash away the blood of guilt from her hands. Typically an act of desperation not to atone but to cover up one's guilt in the hope of escaping the crime.

This shows the washing of hands reflects Lady Macbeth's fear of being exposed for conspiracy to murder. All she fears is that she and her husband will be taken to prison and judged by the community.

"Since his majesty went into the field, I have seen her rise from her bed, throw her nightgown upon her, unlock her closet, take forth paper, fold it, write upon 't, read it, afterwards seal it, and again return to bed; yet all this while in a most fast sleep" (Macbeth 5.1.58).

Lady Macbeth's sleepwalking symbolizes the heartbreak and psyche she finds herself in. Ever since asking Macbeth to kill innocent people, she is become agitated with guilt. At the start, Lady Macbeth was the one pushing on Macbeth to kill Duncan but as the play goes on she becomes weaker as Macbeth becomes stronger, Macbeth isn't troubled by what he has done to the extent Lady Macbeth is.

Her role in the play slowly becomes smaller and smaller as she ends up being driven mad by the guilt and soon can no longer take it, and ends up taking her own life hoping that her torment will end now that she is dead. "The Queen, my Lord is dead" [Act V, S 5, L 18],

Lady Macbeth takes her life right before the battle against the English is about to begin. This taking of her own life demonstrates her fear and in the end what that fear can do to a person. Although; Fear is a quality that should be tackled by every human being. Elemental fear is inevitable in life. Sometimes Fear is essential in our life to protect ourselves. While talking about overcoming fear, it could be easily said by everyone but attaining a fearless attitude, could be a big task to achieve. Though fear is the main concept of this research, the characters Macbeth and Lady Macbeth transforms from fearlessness to fear which eventually leads them to their death. Thus, Psychological stress of fear are depicted in the play "Macbeth".

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