Blood In Macbeth Essay, Research Paper

Blood in Macbeth

In the play Macbeth, a symbol of blood is portrayed frequently and has different meanings throughout the play, this symbol is developed until it eventually becomes the main theme of the play. The first use of blood is one of honor and respect, and occurs when Duncan sees the injured captain and says “What bloody man is that”(1.2.1). This symbolizes the braveness shown of the soldier who been injured in the battle. In the next instance it is used the injured captain says “Which smok’d with bloody execution”(1.2.18) , he is referring to Macbeth’s braveness in which his sword is covered in the blood of the enemy.

After these few references to honor, the symbol of blood now is changed to show a meaning of treachery and treason. Lady Macbeth begins this meaning of blood when she asks the spirits to “make thick my blood”(1.5.44). What she is saying is that she wants to make herself ruthless and guiltless for the act that she is about to commit. Lady Macbeth knows that the evidence of blood is a treacherous symbol, and she knows it will remove the guilt from her and Macbeth and instead go to the servants when she says “If he do bleed, I’ll gild the faces of the grooms withal, for it must seem their guilt”(2.2.54-56).

Another way that blood is symbolized is as of guilt. First Macbeth hints at his guilt when he says “Will all great Neptune’s ocean wash this blood clean from my hand"(2.2.59), meaning that he wondered if he would ever be able to forget the horrible murder that he had committed. Then the ghost of Banquo all bloody comes to haunt Macbeth at the banquet. The sight of ghosts represents his guilt for the murder of Banquo, which he was involved in. Lady Macbeth shows an example of guilt using the symbol of blood in the scene in which she walks in her sleep. She says “Out damned spot! Out I say! One: two: why then ’tis time to do’t: hell is murky. Fie, my lord, fie, a soldier, and afeard? What need we fear who knows it when none can call out power to account? Yet who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him”(5.1.38-43). This speech proves that she cannot wipe the blood of Duncan off of her hands. When Macbeth had been feeling guilty, she said, “A little water clears us of this deed”(2.2.66).

The symbol of blood reverses its course at the end of the play. When Macbeth says to Macduff "My soul is too charged with blood of thine already"(5.8.5-6), the theme is set at guilt. The Macduff responds by saying "thou bloodier villain than terms can give thee out"(5.8.7-8), the them changes back to treason and treachery. Finally, after Macduff kills Macbeth at the end of the play, the symbolism of blood in the play goes back to what it was at the beginning of the play. It is the symbol of honor towards for Malcolm this time. The death of Macbeth is what causes honor to be given to Macduff, for which he is congratulated. So as has been the case in the play, the meaning of the symbol of blood changes from honor to treachery and treason, and then to guilt. After this, it returns to the symbolic meaning of honor once again after the character that changed the meaning of blood from honor to treason is killed.

In this analysis, it is shown that Macbeth was the one that caused the initial changing of the meaning of blood in the play. In observing these changes in the meaning of blood throughout the play, it can be shown that blood in itself has many different possible meanings.