Lady Macbeth: Stronger Imagination Than Will Essay, Research Paper

By the end of Sheakspeare s “Macbeth,” Lady Macbeth has proven that her imagination is stronger than her will. During the beginning of the play, Lady M had been the iron fist and authority icon for Macbeth. She was the voice of determination and hardness, yet deep down, she never carried such traits to begin with. She started this ordeal with a negative, bombastic rhetoric, preying on Macbeth s weaknesses in order to egg him on. In no way did she make a positive contribution to Macbeth or to herself. However, Macbeth soon becomes more independent and shows more of his own self-ambition. Eventually, Lady Macbeth begins to show her true, stripped away and “wither d” nature. Lady Macbeth s vulnerability increases as time passes, and her enthusiasm wanes. Lady Macbeth is mainly responsible for aggravating the struggle between Macbeth s morality, devotion and “vaulting ambition.” This duality in Lady Macbeth s character plays a huge role in planting the seed for Macbeth s downfall and eventual demise.Lady Macbeth imagines that she has the capability to be a remorseless and determined villain, but she isn t anything of the like in reality. She thinks that her will to follow through with her thoughts outweighs Macbeth s determination. Lady Macbeth views her husband as “too full o the milk of human kindness/To catch the nearest way,” (I-v, 16-17). Within the first act, she deems herself the more committing and authoritative person in this couple. She claims that “that which rather [Macbeth] dost fear to do,” could be fulfilled if, “I may pour my spirits in thine ear” (I-v, 23-25). She believes matters should be taken into her own hands from the moment she receives the letter about the witches prophecies. Lady Macbeth believes that Macbeth doesn t have the “spirit” to “catch the nearest way” (I-v, 17). At this moment, she decides that quick action will be the basis of her reasoning and planning. Lady Macbeth intentionally tries to ignore consequence and concentrate on securing Macbeth s future as king of Scotland. She looks to the quickest way as one that may lack rationality, but shortens their path to the throne. When Lady Macbeth heard Macbeth pondering the many reasons he shouldn t kill the current king of Scotland, she realized that she was now more committed to the crime than Macbeth was. She scolds him for even having such thoughts, accusing him of being cowardly. Lady Macbeth decides to allude to herself as the mother of a baby. She would have the “nipple pluck d from his boneless gums/And dashed the brains out” (I-vii, 57-58) if she had promised to do the deed. Her shocking and persuasive effect on Macbeth convinces him that he is “settled,” (I-iii, 79). By hearing a woman who seems to be fearless of his anxieties, he is soothed. But even here, however, we begin to catch a glimpse of Lady Macbeth s very unstable mind. By using such a graphic description, she reflects her straining desperation for Macbeth s commitment. She knows that Macbeth is a strong person, and she must seem stronger to convince him to go along with her. She now has to wear a mask of this determined and cold character, creating more distance between her true self and Macbeth.At one point, Lady Macbeth demands the assistance of the supernatural evil forces: “You murdering ministers Come, thick night [from] the dunnest smoke of hell” (I-vi, 47-50). Being totally rash, Lady Macbeth summons the evil as if she can undermine the power of darkness to her advantage. She asks for the assistance of the evil, implying that she holds no resident evil in her soul. It must act as an additive to fulfill a transformation. Lady Macbeth is creating, instead of magnifying, wickedness that she must manifest in order to propel Macbeth. She embraces the darkness and welcomes it. By being so crude in her requests, she must believe that she is far too valorous to be negatively affected by it. It is rather ironic to see the utter reversal of this at the end of the play. She eventually goes delirious, carrying a lit candle wherever she walked (V-i, 17.5). This behavior is an indeed pathetic attempt to try and fend off the real, evil darkness with a man-made light. She looks to Lady Macduff with a countenance of that which would belong to a ghost, and began to express a compassion that she had never felt (or at least shown). Lady Macbeth s decaying remorse she had chosen to restrain had sunken into her brain, like a sump, slowly grabbing at her thoughts one by one. The thought of the evil, which she once accepted, was now an image of terror in her mind. The darkness had stripped her of her mask, and she is now engulfed in agony and sorrow. She is helpless.Contrary to her original belief, Lady Macbeth s ability to guide and control Macbeth is no stronger than his own initiative. She receives a letter from Macbeth with the news that he was prophesied as the king of Scotland. As soon as her eyes ran across the words, she said, “thou shalt be/What thou art promised” (I-v, 14-15). She suggests, by this quick reaction, her intentions to be a major participant in ensuring Macbeth s royal success. After the murder is plotted between the two, Duncan decides to make a surprise appearance at Macbeth s house. Lady Macbeth tells her husband to put the “great business into my dispatch” (I-v, 67), taking charge and covering for Macbeth, who is defenseless to the overbearing tension residing in himself. As the situation escalates, Lady Macbeth tries to soothe him by explaining that “things without remedy/Should be without regard: What s done is done” (III-ii, 11-12). She has changed her technique with Macbeth from shock and intimidation to restraint. She says “You must leave this” (III-ii, 36), which sounds calming and unworried. Her control over Macbeth has waned, and over herself, her control is dwindling as each second passes. The fire she once had, which drove Macbeth forward is now is now no more than a minute spark. The guilt is now becoming unbearable for Lady Macbeth. Her small, inarticulate sentences reveal that she feels distraught from Macbeth s obsessing. She is beginning to lose that controlling stiffness. She begins to ask Macbeth “what s to be done” (III-ii, 44), which is a drastic change in control. She doesn t voice any opinions or plans of any sort for the rest of the play. Lady Macbeth is now in awe of Macbeth, a contrast to when Macbeth was in awe of Lady Macbeth s infanticide analogy. She, by the end of the play, has lost self-confidence by realizing that most of this situation is a result of her impulsiveness and instability.

Lady Macbeth imagines that she has ability to hide her true emotions, though her mind is as frail as an “egg” (IV-iii 83). She claims that she can act to “look like the innocent flower/But be the serpent under t” (I-v, 64-65). When Macbeth starts to hallucinate and go crazy at a dinner party, Lady Macbeth decides to try to make it seem as if it is nothing to be worried about. She uses a half-witted lie, calling this outburst “But as a thing of custom: tis no other” (III-iv, 96). The only contribution she has made throughout the book is to worsen their situation! Macbeth is now “customarily” psychotic, according to Lady Macbeth. The peoples skepticism at this point is at its highest, and Lady Macbeth is to blame. Just before Lady Macbeth s death, she blurts out, in the company of two strangers, that “all the perfume/of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand” (V-i, 48-49). Even the bystander close by explained that she was speaking in ways which she would regret. In order to preserve the image competent to drive Macbeth, she sacrificed one of the most important things: her true emotions. I find it extremely paradoxical that she earlier thought that a few drops of water would clear her of such a deed when she was in the actual act of the murder. The true feelings that had been festering inside of her head were rather ironically, the cause for her undoing. Lady Macbeth is the enterprising force in the beginning of the book, driving Macbeth and fueling his ambition and greed to have the crown in their clutch. Lady Macbeth has the persuasiveness capable if humiliating someone into murder, but has no personal capacity to execute “the deed,” though she spoke, at times, as if she would take the opportunity whenever it arose. Macbeth was unfortunately reliant upon most of what Lady Macbeth said. This is the single possible reason for Macbeth s failure and eventual demise. They both failed to utilize the point of view of the doer that considered the consequences more realistically. Macbeth started to succumb to the belief that deeds “must be acted ere they be scann d,”(III, iv 140). She has far too many weaknesses herself to be playing the iron fist which she started out as. As we could notice, from the very beginning, she knew deep down that she hadn t the ability to be a guiding force to Macbeth. When Lady Macbeth finally recognizes her incompetence, all else crumbles, including her husband. The significance of this character and her faults is her role as the foundation and authority in the beginning of the play, which plants the seed for failure from beginning to end. She led Macbeth and Scotland past a point of experience, or a point of no return, as Blake would describe it. The murder of Duncan marked the beginning of a downward spiral, where the country would never be able to live normally as long as Macbeth and Lady M. reigned. It is the same concept as is seen in Wuthering Heights. Thrushgross Grange and Wuthering Heights wouldn t have been able to continue regularly if Heathcliff hadn t died. Evil, once introduced, never goes away unless it is destroyed. There are no exceptions to such a concept. No people breach the grasp of the true darkness.

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