Lit Essay, Research Paper

Language and tone can be used to show the attitudes which an author portrays towards his characters in any literary work. In Macbeth, as well as many other Shakespearean plays, Shakespeare applies language to the tone of the play, and also shows how his choice of words reflects the attitudes he expresses towards each individual character. The choice of language which Lord and Lady Macbeth and the witches use shows a prime example of the tone of the play.

The tone of the supernatural motif which exists in Macbeth is a direct reflection of the language of the witches. Shakespeare s choice of foul words which the witches use in their speech represent the witches character as a dark and gruesome one. The language and tone of the witches stays the same throughout the play for the reason that the portrayal of their character is also predominantly evil. The primary example of how the language of the witches relates to the tone is in act IV when they talk about the ingredients of their brew, Eye of newt and toe of frog, wool of bat and tongue of dog (IV.i.14-15). This choice of words unquestionably shows that the tone of the witches character. In addition, the tone of the witches can also be looked at as an evil one, Come then, lets make haste and evil, (III.v.36).

On the contrary, the tone of the majority of the characters drastically changes. In the case of Macbeth, the portrayal of the tone of his character by Shakespeare goes from a weak to a strong one. For the most part, the tone of Macbeth s character at key times is brave and loyal for the exception that he still has his tragic flaw of ambition. This is proved to be true when he is unsure of murdering the king, False face must hide what the false heart doth know, (I.vii.82). This shows the discrepancy he has between his false face which does not accurately represent him, and his heart which is also false because he is going to be capable of betrayal. The way in which this relates to the tone is that this use of language by Macbeth shows him to be a weak character.

Also, as the play progresses, his tone changes from weak to strong. Shakespeare shows his character to be a daring one when he decides to fight Macduff despite the fact that he knew that the witches prophecy will come true, Though Birnam wood be come Dunsinane, and thou not of woman born , I will try the last, (V.viii.31-33). This clearly shows that he has mentally become a lot stronger for the reason that he will fight till the death.

Similarly, the tone of Lady Macbeth s character changes. However, the main

difference is that her choice of language goes from strong to weak, and not weak to strong. This is true because at the beginning she is so daring for the reason that she not at all hesitant to murder Duncan, in fact , she scolds her husband for being a coward for being hesitant. However, she ultimately reaches her fate for the exact reason that she is morally weak and filled with guilt. In addition, the tone of her character is fairly portrayed as a strong one when she is not at all bothered by the king s death, A little

water clears us of this deed, (II.ii.67). On the other hand, she cannot refrain from washing her hands when she realizes how bad of a deed she has done, All of the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this hand, (V.i.44).

In addition to the tone changes in the characters language, soliloquies can also be used to describe how tone and language are used throughout the play. Since the soliloquies are primarily said by Macbeth, his character is the one that is for the most part reflected upon. In his first Soliloquy, Macbeth s character is reflected upon because he ponders over the consequences of killing Duncan from different prospectives, which reveal his inner struggle of whether he should or should not commit the murder. His speech therefore portrays his weak character.

In his final soliloquy, Macbeth s tone of character is shown by Shakespeare as a strong one since he is not at all concerned with his wife s death, and since is use of language is blunt and cheap . Consequently, tone and language can be used collectively by author (in this case Shakespeare) to show what feelings an author has towards his character. The choice of words used by a character also shows his or her moral values.