The Use Of The Super Natural In Macbeth Essay, Research Paper

The Use of The Supernatural in Macbeth In the sixteenth century witches were becoming very popular characters in books, poems, and stories. Witch hunts and burning witches at the stake were very common. William Shakespear, one of the most distinguished authors of the sixteenth century, used witches in one of his plays, he also used ghosts, apparitions and unnatural happenings. He wrote the play for James the first. Macbeth was the name of the play. James was familiar with the story of Macbeth. It was through the reign of this bloodthirsty king that James gained the throne several hundred years later. Several different types of supernatural appearances are used in Macbeth, the witches, the ghost of Banquo, apparitions and unnatural things in nature. With these objects’ Shakespear weaves a magnificent tale of temptation, devastation, treachery and betrayal. In Act 1 Scene 1 the witches make their first appearance. The witches are on the moor. The weird sisters set a large part of the mood in this scene with the simple line “Fair is foul, and foul is fair” (Macbeth, Act1, Scene) Shakespear was wise to use the witches in the very first scene because it obtained the audiences’ attention. Shakespear also knew that witches intrigued King James. His interest had even caused him to write a book about them. King James, I believe was one main reason that Shakespear incorporated the witches. The witches would catch King James’s attention immediately and he would possibly give Shakespear a bonus for their appearance. Their next appearance captures the audience or reader even more when they appear from the mist and confront Macbeth and Banquo. The witches have beards and wrinkled skin. Banquo has trouble deciphering whether they are women or men. ” you should be women, / and yet your beards forbid me to interpret / That you are so.”(Macbeth, Act 1, Scene 3) The weird sisters immediately hail Macbeth. The first calls him by his title, Thane of Glamis, the second witch calls him, Thane of Cawdor and the third witch says he will be king. Macbeth immediately becomes aroused by what the witches say but he thinks they have the wrong person and simply explains that the Thane of Cawdor is alive. He cannot possibly become king because of the king’s sons Malcolm and Donaldbain. Macbeth a man of great moral, contemplates killing the king and his sons for a brief second. He is immediately ashamed of his thoughts and calls upon the darkness to hide his thoughts from all others. Banquo, after hearing what they have prophesied for Macbeth, wishes to know what great things are going to happen to him. The first witch says to Banquo “Lesser than Macbeth but greater.”(Macbeth, Act 1, Scene 3) The third witch says to Banquo “Thou shalt get kings, though thou shalt be none.” (Macbeth, Act 1, Scene 3) The news that he will be the father of kings excites Banquo, but, he does not take the witches seriously. What the weird women tells him almost amuses Banquo. Macbeth contemplates killing King Duncan again when Ross brings forth the message that the Thane of Cawdor is dead and that Duncan has appointed Macbeth Thane of Cawdor. This news stuns Macbeth, he suddenly, puts trust in the words of the witches. The witches could manipulate Macbeth. They had power over his mind. It was because of them and their promises that Macbeth would later kill Duncan. When Macbeth kills Duncan, the night is unusually dark. Fleance mentions how the stars are all out when he says: “Their candles are all out.” (Macbeth, Act 1 Scene 7) Banquo also mentions the darkness when he says, “the moon is down.” (Macbeth, Act 1, Scene 7) Macbeth has hallucinations before he kills Duncan, another piece of supernatural material that Shakespear used in the play. Macbeth is so uptight about killing Duncan he sees a dagger. He reaches for this object but he cannot touch it. The fact that he is hallucinating is made clear when he says: “Is this a dagger which I see before me, / The handle toward my hand Come, let me clutch thee; / I have thee not, and yet I see thee still. / Art thou not, fatal vision, sensible/ To feelings as to sight.” ( Macbeth, Act 2 Scene 1). After Duncan’s death, Lennox speaks of an unruly night. Lennox has arrived at Macbeth’s castle to ride with the king. Screams of death and an earthquake were a few of the unruly things they experienced. In the next scene Ross and the Old Man discuss the strange happenings of the night of Duncan’s death. The old man is seventy years old and he says he cannot recall a night like it. Ross, also mentions the dark night as Lennox did. The old Man agrees with Ross and then speaks of another unnatural passing, a falcon, was attacked by an owl. To the reader the falcon could represent Duncan and the owl, Macbeth. Ross then mentions Duncan’s beautiful horses. He calls them the finest of the breeds, well trained and obedient. He says that they became savage, attacking one another when their master died. The killing of anyone was an unnatural deed, but, the killing of the key was an act against God. Scottish people believed that God appointed their kings. Their king was considered almost divine. Killing the king was an act against God, therefore, all the unnatural happenings. Shakespear uses the supernatural again in Act 3, Scene 4, only this time the supernatural is not a witch, but, the Ghost of Banquo. Macbeth was having a large feast to celebrate his kingship. Banquo could not attend the feast and Macbeth seized this as the perfect opportunity to kill Banquo. He was the only person other then himself, who knew the promises the witches had made to him. Banquo, also suspected Macbeth, of killing Duncan. Macbeth sent murderers after Banquo and his son Fleance, because Macbeth sees Fleance as a threat to the throne. The murderers kill Banquo but Fleance escapes. Macbeth is shocked and terrified when Banquo suddenly appears in his chair at the banquet. Banquo has gory locks, and has several wounds. Immediately, Macbeth, asks who is playing this terrible prank on him. Macbeth does not realize that Banquo’s ghost is visible only to him. Everyone in the banquet hall stares at Macbeth thinking that the king has taken ill. Lady Macbeth quickly says that her husband takes seizures and to ignore him because he would be embarrassed if he exited his seizure and saw them staring at him. Macbeth meanwhile asks; “if charnel houses and our graves must send/ Those that we bury back, our monuments/ Shall be the maws of kites.” (Macbeth, Act 3, Scene 4)

Shakespear uses the Ghost of Banquo to create interest in the middle of the play. Ghosts were becoming a common topic among the people in the sixteenth century. Shakespear, also uses the Ghost of Banquo to make the audience believe that Macbeth may be a little crazy. He sees daggers and now only he can see the Ghost that suddenly appears. In reality, Banquo, was a tyrant like Macbeth, but, Shakespear, decided not to insult King James by showing everyone in England that their king had obtained the throne wrongfully. King James was Shakespear’s main source of funds at the time. In Act 3, Scene 5, the witches appear again, only this time they are meeting with Hecate, Queen of the witches. Hecate is furious with them for not consulting her, before they spoke to Macbeth. Researchers, scholars, and Shakespear critics do not believe that Shakespear wrote this scene. These people believe that drama groups who were performing Macbeth added the scene, after Shakespear’s death. The scene was likely used to catch audience attention in the middle of the play. Shakespear, received the audience’s attention in Act 4 Scene 1. A boiling cauldron, in a cave sets a dark and eerie mood. The audience surely would have been on the edge of their seats when they heard what the witches were putting into their cauldron. “Scale of dragon, tooth of wolf, / Witches’ mummy maw and gulf.” (Macbeth, Act 4, Scene 1). The above were some of the objects that were thrown into the witches’ cauldron. Macbeth enters after the cauldron is bubbling from the ingredients the witches have put in it. We are unsure if they gave Macbeth a herbal drug. They may have given hemlock to, Macbeth, to make him hallucinate. Macbeth had gone to the witches demanding to know what his future may hold, how long he will be king and whom he should fear. The witches call forth the evil spirits that they serve. An apparition rises above the boiling cauldron. The first apparition is a warrior and warns Macbeth of Macduff. This apparition represents Macduff in his battle attire. The witches call a second apparition this time the apparition is a bloody newborn child. The apparition tells, Macbeth, that anyone who is woman born will never harm him, in the lines “The power of man, for none of born/ Shall harm Macbeth.” (Macbeth, Act 4, Scene 1.) Macbeth thinks he is now immortal and will die of old age. This is where the witches tricked him. During Shakespear’s time, woman born was, a child born in the natural process, but taken from women meant a child that was born through a cesarean section. What Macbeth does not know is that Macduff was born through a cesarean section. The newborn vanishes and the witches bring another apparition to Macbeth. The next apparition is a child with a crown on his head, holding a tree. This apparition tells him that he will not be defeated until “Great Birnam Wood to high Dunsinane Hill / Shall come against him.” ( Macbeth, Act 4, Scene 1.) Macbeth is baffled. He cannot figure out how trees could walk to his castle. He, also, does not understand why the apparitions have contradicted one another. The second apparition told him that no one born of women will defeat him and then the third apparition tells him that he will be defeated. He comes to the conclusion that the third apparition means, they will never defeat him because trees will never walk. The witches, again have taken advantage of Macbeth and his logical thinking. Macbeth satisfied with these answers asks if Banquo’s sons will ever rule when he says: ” – shall Banquo’s issue ever / Reign in this kingdom?” (Macbeth, Act 4, Scene 1) The witches tell me to ask no more questions after this one. The cauldron descends. Eight kings appear and Banquo, holding a mirror, follows them. This is not the answer Macbeth wanted to hear. Macbeth, asked questions that he did not want to know the real answers. Macbeth is enraged that he will not have a dynasty and that he has killed king Duncan for someone else to build a dynasty. Macbeth is terribly upset. The witches almost mock him after he has seen the final apparition. The witches have Macbeth so confident in himself that he believes no one will ever defeat him. Macbeth, has been positioned, by the witches, to fall from the throne. The calling of the apparitions was the last time the witches appear in the play. Macbeth reigns unhappily for many more years. His wife becomes seriously ill and no doctor can cure her. Eventually, Malcolm, challenges Macbeth, for the throne. Macbeth, knew he was going to die because Malcolm’s army cut down the trees of Birnam forest and marched behind the trees to camouflage themselves. Macduff, seeks out Macbeth in battle to avenge the death of his family. Macduff informs Macbeth that he “was not of women born,” but, taken from women. Macduff then kills Macbeth and Malcolm, the legitimate king of Scotland claims the throne. Shakespear’s use of the supernatural in this play was incredible. He used many different aspects of the supernatural to make his play fascinating for the audience or a page turner for the reader. For me the supernatural was definitely the most interesting part of the play. They amazed me with how well the supernatural fit into the play. The play was like the magnificent tapestry that hangs on the wall.

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