

# *Blood Imagery in Macbeth*

**” Captain: But I am faint. My gashes cry for help. Duncan: So well thy words become thee as thy wounds. They smack of honor both.” Act 1 Scene 2**

These both lines spoken by Duncan and the Captain show the importance of a good soldier that has fought and has been injured in battle. What we can understand from this quote is that those who have been injured in battle fighting for the king will be rewarded because it is seen as noble and loyal. Blood is seen here as not something bad nor disgusting, quite the contrary, the action of dropping blood for a cause showed perseverance and not dying after being wounded shows how strong a warrior is. Not only dropping your own blood, but killing a large amount of enemies and achieving victory in war is also seen as worthy. The motif blood is first seen in Scene 2 but further on blood is also referenced not as honorable, but as evil and as if your blood was connected to your soul.

**“Lady Macbeth: Make thick my blood. Stop up th’ access and passage to remorse.” Act 1 scene 5**

In this scene Macbeth has informed his wife about the three witches and what they had told him about his fate. But he doesn't know whether fate will crown him or if he needs to do something to get crowned. By reading this Lady Macbeth understands that if Macbeth will become king she needs to kill Duncan so that the crown can be given to Macbeth. As she is planning what she will do she does a small “prayer” to evil spirits wishing for her to become evil and make thick my blood. This second main appearance of motif sends the message that the blood here is seen as a reflection of the soul or body of the person. As she asks for her blood to be made thick she wants to be made stronger and more evil. We can also understand that by making her blood thick she will not feel anymore as if her blood was connected to her emotions. Different from the first quote, here blood is seen as something deeper than just showing your importance in battle, it is seen as a gateway to your inner self.

There are lots of mentions to death in Macbeth but few specifically to blood.

- Blood has different uses.
- Blood is linked to your “soul”/inner self
- Having your blood dropped in battle or killing lots of enemies shows worthiness and honor.

**“And, on thy blade and dudgeon, gouts of blood. Which was not so before.” II.i**

Macbeth in Act 2 Scene 1 follows a floating dagger that leads him into Duncan's room. After Macbeth has done the deed he becomes filled with guilt. ” Will all of great Neptune's ocean wash this blood clean from my hand?No...” In this act, different from the first act where dropping blood was noble, blood is connected to guilt and suffering. Macbeth says how not even all of the water in Neptune will be able to clean this blood off him, and by this he means he will always repent what he has done. In this act where there is blood there is tragedy.

**“Here lay Duncan, his silver skin laced with his golden blood” II.iii**

Similar to act 1, in scene 3, blood is connected to the person's character. Since Duncan is a noble person of good will, people describe his blood as golden. Since it was Duncan's blood that was dropped there were lots of consequences like darkness and Macbeth's suffering, if it were someone less noble dying then this might not happen which supports the idea that blood is connected to your soul. What we can observe is that blood's meaning doesn't change a lot until now. Blood in war is seen as noble, blood is connected to your soul or personality, and blood in murder is connected to tragedy, repenting, and consequences.

General Conclusions:

- Blood in murder is connected to repent and tragedy
- Blood is seen again being connected to the soul
- Blood's meaning hasn't changed much but now we can observe that blood being spilled in different situations mean different things.

### **“And with thy bloody and invisible hand cancel and tear to pieces that great bond.” 3.III**

Much like the previous acts, act III treats blood as something bad and evil. In this quote a bloody means both covered with blood but it also means an evil hand. In this act there are no positive meaning for blood. This is a very dark chapter in this sense. Blood here is always connected to “the dark side”.

### **“I am in blood stepped in so far that, should I wade no more, returning were as tedious as go o’er.” 3. IV**

Here blood has the same meaning as in the last quote. Macbeth says that he has stepped too far into blood. We can understand this as if he were saying, I’ve stepped so far into evil. In this quote blood is also given a new meaning. Here blood can be interpreted as greed. Macbeth says that he can’t turn back from this blood because it would be tedious, instead he can only step deeper. In this act we can see a contrast between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth’s “relationship” with blood. In previous acts LM also asked for an evil blood, but she started to “step out” of blood. In contrast, Macbeth got so greedy he started to become more evil .

### **“Blood will have blood.” 3. IV**

This quote is saying that Blood will bring more blood. So we can also see a connection between blood and greed. Spilling blood will cause even more blood to be spilled. Once you start this “bloody business” it is hard to come back, it consumes you, and we can see this each time stronger with Macbeth and each with time it fades in Lady Macbeth.

Conclusions –

Blood -> Evil

Once you step into blood it is hard to come back

Craving for blood will consume you (Blood will have blood)

Blood brings greed

### **“Cool it with a baboon’s blood.” IV. i.**

In act IV we see blood in the witches lines when they are brewing a potion or a spell and the last ingredient in the mix is blood which can be interpreted as evil, since witches are evil. Also in this same line it says, “then the charm is firm and good”, as if blood was the last and essential ingredient in an evil potion.

### **“Be bloody, bold, and resolute.”**

Here we see blood again with the same meaning as previously, evil. This time Macbeth is also with the witches but now the apparitions are telling him about his future. When they say for him to be bloody it means that he should drop blood and be evil.

Blood doesn’t show up as often in act IV as in the other acts.

Conclusion:

Blood seen as evil again.

### **“What, will these hands ne’er be clean?” V. i.**

In this scene Lady Macbeth is daydreaming and is being observed by the doctor and the gentlewoman. When she asks if these hands will ever be clean, she is referring to the “blood” she sees in her hands. This blood is related to all the people she helped kill, all the evil she did. She is very troubled about these deaths and they seem to haunt her in the form of regret. The blood she dropped is driving her crazy.

“Why should I play the Roman fool and die on mine own sword? Whiles I see lives. the gashes do better upon them.”

Even though there is no blood in this quote, we can relate it to blood because Macbeth in these lines is saying that it isn't noble to kill himself in this fight, he is better off if he tries to kill as many as he can and dies fighting. Here blood is a little bit related to dignity and honor, because it isn't honorable to take the easy way out.

**“Had he his hurts before? Ay, on the front.”**

Here Siward is told about his son's death and asks if his cuts were on his back or front. To be killed by the back means you were running away and it isn't a noble death, but if you are hurt in your chest than you were killed fighting and that is honorable. Here blood is seen again connected to honor.

Blood is related again to honor

Dying while fighting is worthy while running is not

Killing yourself is not honorable