

drama, and would lose all higher poetic interest.

Thus we observe that Lady Macbeth and her lord, in their doings and sufferings admirably represent the general types in which the operations of tragic fate and poetic justice are symbolized. To man belongs the deed. It is therefore upon Macbeth that the commission of the crime devolves; it is he who has to accept the responsibility and has to fight the world for its consequences. Whereas Lady Macbeth, through her eloquence and the power of her inspiration, brings her husband's wavering resolution to its maturity. Macbeth, moreover, lays open before us the whole working of his struggling mind: first the resistance of his moral nature before the deed, then the triumph of the dark powers over it, and lastly its reaction in the play of his gloomy fancy down to his final destruction. Lady Macbeth, with her ardent nature, seems to be wholly controlled by the demoniac power of her ambition and intoxicated, as it were, by its fascinations. Under the impulse of this passion she attacks the faltering purpose of her husband with an irresistible eloquence, urging the murderous deed upon him as the only means of attaining the object of his desires. In doing so she appears like one inspired, who in that condition holds command over extraordinary powers. Her passionate exultation having reached a point where no moral reflection can effect it, she attempts to ward off the Furies from Macbeth's mind by infusing into it some of that energy with which she steels her own heart against remorse.

However, the final reaction of her moral nature does not assume, as in Macbeth, the form of alternate paroxysms of horror and transport, but manifests itself only here and there by inarticulate outbursts of sudden dread or insuppressible anguish, as in those whispered questions exchanged between the guilty pair after the commission of the murder. Furthermore, while Macbeth's fall is accomplished by forces that move upon him from without, his spouse succumbs to an inward process of physical and mental dissolution. The more the outward political struggle against

the murderous usurper advances to the foreground in the play, and the more the action is transferred from the psychological field to the field of history, the more Lady Macbeth recedes into the background, and the Nemesis that finally overwhelms her appears only as a gloomy episode in the general destruction that engulfs the world of crime of which she forms a part. Thus the judgment imposed upon her appears in the form of a gradual mental decay, which reveals to us the utter wretchedness that must have preceded this condition. As before, the transports of her ambition broke forth in eloquent exultation, so now, when her doom descends upon her, the Furies that gnaw at her heart betray themselves by the suppressed mutterings of a being that slowly works its own mental and physical destruction.

Woman cannot, like man, willingly embrace her own destruction in the open fight with the world, gathering new daring from the very excitement of the struggle. Her ruin is accomplished by the inward tortures of the soul, which we know only by their deadly effects. In Lady Macbeth, therefore, that daring spirit, which at first upheld the whole action of the drama, suffers utter collapse, as soon as the feverish tension of her nerve-powers subsides, and the impending doom of her husband no longer calls for her support. Womanlike, she is confined, in the display of her energies, to her inner world. In this world she becomes entirely immured, and here the remembrance of the past gradually destroys mind and body.

Thus Shakespeare, in Lady Macbeth, has drawn a character which, by the extraordinary force which she puts forth, challenges comparison with the most impressive types of womanhood that art has yet devised. It finds its counterpart only in those semi-mythical creations of the ancients, such as the Medea or the Phædra of the Greeks, or the Crimhild and Brunhild, the heroines of the medieval bard of the north. But these owed their more than human powers to an origin divine, whereas Shakespeare's matchless art has fashioned, out of purely human elements, a being of almost titanic energies.