

# Medea and Lady Macbeth: Control in Madness and Strength

...and the women  
That had the natural brightness, whose the faces  
Shall still out-shine the moons, or the sun may bid  
Be darken'd with  
Lady Macbeth's ambition

The evil that I do, I am content that will  
For a purpose that is greater than my will  
Shall overcome me

## Lady Macbeth

- Lady Macbeth defines herself through her relationship with her husband, which leads her to take on the full responsibility of his deeds and ambitions under the weight of the guilt that accompanies them, that ultimately destroys her herself.
- She is a woman of a very noble birth.
- She is a woman of a very noble birth, as she was the daughter of an earl of Glamour.
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## Grace Beckett

## Thesis

- Medea and Lady Macbeth prove that defining themselves through their relationships with men is dangerous.
- Medea and Macbeth are affected by Medea and Lady Macbeth and the power shifts within their respective relationships.
- The shared power dynamic leads them from characters to defined female acts of violence through their husbands.
- They provide an important commentary on women in literature because they are portrayed as dead in their strength.
- The violent comment is not because of their strength, but because of their weaknesses.

## Medea

- Medea defines herself through her relationship with her husband, but this relationship is not the source of her strength, but the source of her weakness.
- She is a woman of a very noble birth.
- She is a woman of a very noble birth, as she was the daughter of an earl of Glamour.
- She is a woman of a very noble birth, as she was the daughter of an earl of Glamour.

## Works Cited

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2. "Lady Macbeth." *Shakespeare's Medea*. Ed. Michael S. Sussman. New York: Routledge, 2004. 11-20. Print.

3. "Medea." *Shakespeare's Medea*. Ed. Michael S. Sussman. New York: Routledge, 2004. 21-30. Print.

4. "Lady Macbeth." *Shakespeare's Medea*. Ed. Michael S. Sussman. New York: Routledge, 2004. 31-40. Print.

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## Abstract

This thesis examines the relationship between Medea and Lady Macbeth, two women who are often compared to one another. It explores how their relationships with men are the source of their strength, but also the source of their weakness. The thesis argues that Medea and Lady Macbeth are affected by their relationships with men, and that this relationship is not the source of their strength, but the source of their weakness. The thesis also explores how their relationships with men are the source of their strength, but also the source of their weakness. The thesis argues that Medea and Lady Macbeth are affected by their relationships with men, and that this relationship is not the source of their strength, but the source of their weakness.



# Medea and Lady Macbeth:

Control in Madness and Strength





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# Abstract

- Ideals on women are constantly fluctuating throughout society, theatre and literature. In classical time periods, women were often expected to be meek and powerless. Two salient exceptions to this rule are Shakespeare's Lady Macbeth and Euripedes' Medea. This paper applies feminist ideals and a psychological perspective to examine how these two women are presented as frighteningly mad in their strength. In defining herself purely through the love of her husband, Medea harnesses her madness when he scorns her, thus regaining control over herself through the violence that ensues from her psychopathy. Lady Macbeth defines herself as the power behind her husband. She attempts to take too much control over her husband, and thus feels responsible for the horrendous acts of violence he commits. The insanity that ensues causes her to lose control of herself in a final act of suicidal violence. By defining themselves through their husbands and the balances of control within those relationships, severe power shifts occur. These power shifts prove to be injurious in the violence that accompanies them. Because of this, Medea and Lady Macbeth typify how harmful it is to define oneself through one's relationships with others.

# Thesis

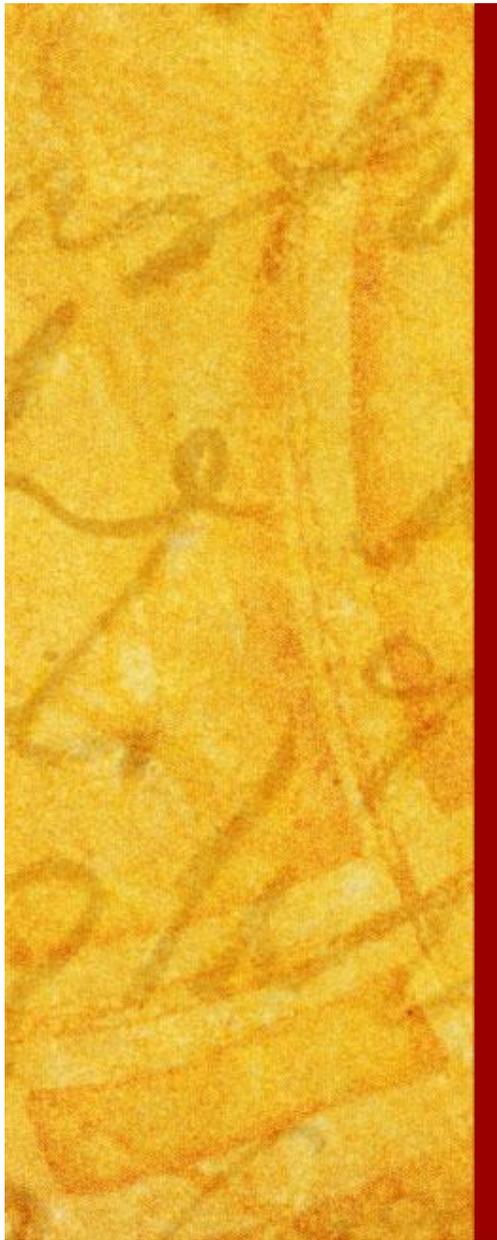
- Medea and Lady Macbeth prove that defining themselves through their relationships with men is injurious.
  - Jason and Macbeth are affected by Medea and Lady Macbeth and the power shifts within their respective relationships.
  - The skewed power dynamics lead these two characters to perform horrible acts of violence through their madness.
  - They provide an important commentary on women in literature because they are portrayed as mad in their strength.
  - The violence committed is not because of their strength, but because of their environments.

# Lady Macbeth

- Lady Macbeth defines herself through her relationship with her husband, which leads her to take on the full responsibility of his actions and crumble under the weight of the guilt that accompanies them, thus committing violence upon herself.
  - She defines herself as the wife of a possible king
  - Because she is a woman, she cannot do the necessary evil deeds, so she uses her husband as an instrument of destruction.
  - She is the driving force behind his violent acts.
  - As their actions become more violent, her control over Macbeth spirals.
  - She feels responsible for the Macbeth's descent into Machiavellian violence and for Scotland's descent into tyranny and goes mad with guilt.

# Medea

- Medea defines herself through her relationship with her husband, but loses control when he jilts her. She regains this control when she commits her acts of violence.
  - She harnesses her insanity and strength to take revenge.
  - She could be considered criminally insane.
  - When she is betrayed, her passionate love transforms into passionate hate.
  - Her children are projections of Jason. Though killing them hurts her, it is necessary to emotionally destroy Jason as he has destroyed her.



Come, you spirits

That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,  
And fill me from the crown to the toe top-full  
Of direst cruelty.

–Lady Macbeth (Shakespeare 1:5:30-33)

The evil that I do, I understand full well,  
But a passion drives me greater than my will.

–Medea (Eurepides 1079)

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