



Lady Macbeth and Rebecca West: The Masculine Woman's Oedipal Complex

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Abstract

Freud likened Lady Macbeth and Rebecca West to patients destroyed by success due to guilt. In my paper, I show that these masculine women feel overwhelming guilt for the deaths of their respective fathers, and commit suicide in order to expiate this guilt. Lady Macbeth feels *as if*, by instigating the murder of the King, she had murdered her father, and Rebecca West finds out that the invalid she had cared for, and whose death she had caused, was her father. This trajectory bears resemblance to that of Oedipus, who felt no compunction for having killed Laius as long as he regarded him as a stranger, but was overwhelmed with guilt when he realized that Laius was his biological father. *Macbeth* and *Rosmersholm* constitute artful presentations of the masculine woman's oedipal complex, and the structural parallels between the two plays strongly suggest that *Macbeth* served as a template for *Rosmersholm*.

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