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Macbeth: Hero as Criminal

Dr. Sushant Chaturvedi

Assistant Professor,

Department of Applied Science and Humanities,

Rajkiya Engineering College,

Ambedkar Nagar, Uttar Pradesh.

sushant1313@gmail.com

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Abstract:

Macbeth is a play about bad behavior and the consequences of such behavior, in which the main character acts in a manner that seems to go against his baseline character. Macbeth's vaulting ambition is devoid of the "illness" or the ruthlessness that ought to be associated with ambitious goals. In the play, it is referred to as the "illness" of ambitious individuals when they refuse to be human or act humanely. Therefore, Shakespeare demonstrates, in a metaphorical manner, the primary source of the character's future internal suffering. Macbeth does not naturally have a nasty character; he wants to obtain glory, but he does not want to play an unfair game to win it, he is aware of his conscience which is overpowered by his ambition. Under corrupting influences, he transforms into a criminal who not only disrupts his own life but also disrupts the entire nation of Scotland. Following the murder that Macbeth commits against Banquo, Macduff emerges as a powerful counter-force to his tyranny. Macduff prepares to rid Scotland of Macbeth's evil and to assist Malcolm in restoring order and stability to the nation after the devastation that Macbeth caused during his illegal reign. Macbeth is slain in combat by Macduff, who presents the tyrant's severed head to Malcolm to signify the restoration of peace. Through this violent resolution, the play illustrates how a noble figure's tragic flaw can trigger a complete moral decay. Ultimately, Shakespeare warns that individual corruption inevitably manifests as destructive political tyranny.

Keywords: Vaulting Ambition, Suffering, Criminal, Conscience, Tragic Flaw, Political Tyranny, Moral Decay.

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Introduction

Macbeth, written by William Shakespeare, takes on a sacred tone throughout its whole journey. The drama, in addition to having a historical foundation, makes references to tales from the Bible and integrates aspects of religious beliefs and practices that were prevalent in Renaissance England. These aspects include the perils of sin, prophecy, and witchcraft. In their 2016 book, *Shakespeare's Demonology: A Dictionary*, Marion Gibson and Jo Ann Esra write, "demonological phenomena occur repeatedly in his works, but they are usually used as a foundation on which to build stories of more complex human emotion and incident" (10). Shakespeare provides a realistic portrayal of the end of a man as a result of his participation with sin and crimes that incur punishments. Expanding on this cultural background, Patrick Gray and John D. Cox note in their 2014 book, *Shakespeare and Renaissance Ethics*, that "Shakespeare's perspective on morality does not emerge ex nihilo... but instead draws upon a rich variety of intellectual traditions, Christian as well as classical, even in its moments of most ardent critique" (13). Shakespeare makes use of a wide range of images when referring to heaven and hell in order to bring to the attention of the audience the ever-present roles that God and Satan play as well as the seriousness of committing crimes. Analyzing this spiritual framework, Jane Jack argues in her 1955 journal article, "Macbeth, King James, and the Bible," that "Macbeth is a study not only of regicide and tyranny but of a damned soul, of a man who, having destroyed his own conscience, is capable of acting in defiance of the restraints both of human nature and religion" (183). The fall of Macbeth into damnation serves as an illustration of the spiritual perils that sin poses.

Macbeth portrays himself as a divided and increasingly tortured personality

Throughout his soliloquies, Macbeth portrays himself as a divided and increasingly tortured personality. Because of his inherent generosity, Lady Macbeth is concerned that her husband

will not be able to commit murder, voicing these anxieties early in the play. Contemplating his nature, she reflects, "Yet I do fear thy nature; / It is too full o' th' milk of human kindness / To catch the nearest way" (1.5.15-17). Immediately following this, she asserts that Macbeth's ambition is devoid of the "illness" or ruthlessness that ought to accompany ambitious goals.

When Shakespeare recreated Macbeth from Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles*, he faced the complex challenge of transforming a literary criminal into a compelling tragic hero. Macbeth does not experience a smooth, predictable decline into wickedness; rather, he exhibits both the impulses to deteriorate and the instincts to reform. Shakespeare breathes into him a fractured psychology and a soul that begins a voyage toward tragic enlightenment because it cannot entirely neglect its fundamental goodness. To mitigate the impact of his hero's villainy, Shakespeare utilizes exquisite poetic imagination and theatrical devices to highlight Macbeth's lingering heroic traits during the most crucial phases of the play. The playwright crafts an extensive, multifaceted *hamartia* for the tragic hero, expertly balancing extrinsic agents with the resulting *peripeteia*, or reversal of fortune. Ultimately, Macbeth's unique *anagnorisis* his moment of tragic recognition, evokes a powerful cathartic effect. Throughout the drama, the fluid interactions between the conscious, preconscious, and unconscious aspects of Macbeth's mind provide profound insight into his psychological identity crisis.

These specific behavioral and psychological challenges have drawn significant attention from modern literary critics, neurologists, and psychoanalysts. In his 2015 study, "The Psychological Foundations of Shakespearean Character," Christian Churchill draws on Freudian concepts of melancholy and mourning to argue that Macbeth's famous exclamation, "Sleep no more!", exemplifies how immense guilt paralyzes the criminal mind. Churchill contends that Macbeth operates simultaneously as a ruthless killer and a victim of his own severe mental regret, where mounting dread, sadness, and anxiety induce a permanent state of neuropsychological insomnia. Prompted by the persuasive speech of his ambitious wife,

Macbeth faces psychological repercussions he has never encountered before. Churchill concludes that the phrase "sleep no more" functions as a striking metaphor for the profound psychological sicknesses brought about by the act of regicide—specifically terror, despair, and an inescapable sense of conviction.

Theoretical Framework and Analysis

To investigate how Macbeth goes from being a hero to a criminal, this study uses a qualitative interpretive research approach. William Shakespeare's *Macbeth* is the primary textual source for this study, which uses a close reading technique to delve into the play's themes, psychology, and moral implications. To place the argument within the framework of current research, secondary data sources are methodically analyzed. These sources include peer-reviewed journal papers, critical essays, and recognized literary assessments. The research delves into the protagonist's internal struggles, ambitions, remorse, and ethical decline using a psychoanalytic and moral-critical framework. The psychoanalytic framework employed in this study is primarily Freudian. Freud distinguishes between the conscious, preconscious, and unconscious dimensions of mental life, providing a basis for examining desires and impulses that may remain outside conscious awareness while continuing to influence behaviour (Freud, "The Unconscious"). Freud's later structural model distinguishes among the id, ego, and superego, which represent instinctual drives, the rational and reality-oriented faculties, and internalized moral standards and restraints, respectively (Freud, *The Ego and the Id*). In this study, these concepts are used to examine Macbeth's latent ambition, his struggle between desire and moral restraint, and the psychological processes through which an initially suppressed impulse gradually enters consciousness and influences action. To further place the character in the context of the Elizabethan period's social, political, and cultural environment, aspects of New Historicism are taken into account. This study takes a

descriptive-analytical approach, dissecting pivotal moments, soliloquies, and character exchanges to determine how the protagonist goes from heroic to villainous.

Textual Analysis: Latent Ambition and the Witches' Influence

Before Macbeth demonstrates the early prominence of an Aristotelian tragic hero at the opening of the play, is he guilty of harboring criminal ideas of killing Duncan to replace him? Although criminal thinking facilitates criminal deeds and diminishes the greatness of a tragic hero, it is not itself a crime. The tragic hero's responsibility is diminished, particularly when other factors bring that concept to the forefront of the protagonist's consciousness. The murder of Duncan, Macbeth's tragic deed, requires the other two murders, which are both unlawful but logically necessary. Prior to committing these acts, he pitifully wavers between his ideas and his deeds, his ego and his id, teetering on the edge of "To be or not to be," not for a righteous cause like Hamlet's, but for an unsustainable cause like his own self-interest. It is less likely that the witches are responsible for Macbeth's fatal behavior and more likely that he was eager to become king but was unaware of it before he met them. Such a theory may be backed up by a number of reasons.

The first thing that happened when the witches announced their forecasts was that ambition sprang up in Macbeth's breast. If it hadn't, it would have been far more passionate and relentless. Because his sword was "smoked with bloody execution" (1.2.18), Macbeth's homicidal thoughts—the only tactic that seemed to him repeatedly—are the inevitable and unplanned consequences of an army commander whose conduct in the just-finished war smells of deadly valor. Second, he never once considered whether replacing Duncan in an evil way was a virtue or a crime, a morally commendable or repugnant action, or a loyal or disloyal conduct. His recent unwavering support of Duncan raises doubts about his allegiance, leading one to assume that ambition was ingrained in his unconscious.

Finally, he considers the veracity of the witches' predictions, which awakens his latent need to know, asking, "Say from where you owe this strange intelligence?" (1.3.75-76). His exclamation, "Would they had stay'd!" (1.3.82), is an ejaculatory expression of his desire to learn from them if his recently-surfaced aspiration had any chance of coming true. Afterwards, he places a higher importance on his dormant ambition than on the witches' plain proclamations. The fact that Banquo, or perhaps even he himself, would be named Thane of Cawdor in recognition of their courageous defense of Duncan could not have been incalculable to someone with his decision-making and action-taking abilities. "By Sinel's death I know I am Thane of Glamis," he says, confirming one of the three witches' prophecies—a fact that is not hidden nor unknown to them (1.3.71). He is therefore already Thane of Glamis. For this reason, Macbeth exaggerates the significance of the predictions, stating, "The greatest is behind" (1.3.117), as he is now only seeking the "prospect of belief" (1.3.74) to fuel his desire. In "the swelling act of the imperial theme" (1.3.129), he practically makes destiny play a larger part.

However, he is distressed that "function is smother'd in surmise" (1.3.141) since he has more trust in his own actions. Finally, the fact that he does not seek or wait for the witches' assistance before deciding to kill Duncan lends credence to the concept that his ambition is greater and more essential to him than the witches. The witches did not even propose it. Rather, they may be understood as bringing the individual's unconscious desire to the forefront of his awareness. Reflecting on this psychological development in his book, *Shakespearean Tragedy*, A. C. Bradley notes that Shakespeare appears actually to have taken pains to make the natural psychological genesis of Macbeth's crimes perfectly clear (267). As an outcome of this ratiocination, two very significant conclusions are drawn. The first is that Macbeth has a clear unconscious that, in addition to obfuscating from time to time, blinds him and, as a result, strives to dismantle his "single state of man" (1.3.140), his harmonious

and united structure. Secondly, he is actively fighting an unconscious force—the "fantastical murder" (1.3.139) that goes "Against the use of nature" (1.3.137)—rather than avoiding it. The criminal's mental state just before the crime was committed was a factor in the twentieth century's judicial system when deciding on a judgment. The foundation of this judicial system is in human psychology, a field that Shakespeare's brilliance was intrinsically acquainted with.

In his translation and commentary, "Aristotle: On the Art of Poetry," T. S. Dorsch describes the tragic hero who is neither completely corrupt nor an evildoer, but rather a prominent man whose ethical defect causes him to stumble (48). He is the type of man who is not conspicuous for virtue and justice, but he enjoys prosperity and a high reputation, meaning his downfall is not caused by depravity, but by some error. The uprising that Macdonald started serves as an example for him, and it is reasonable to infer that this makes him ambitious.

Shakespeare Crowning Macbeth with Heroic Qualities

An eyewitness nobleman referred to him as "Bellona's bridegroom, lapp'd in proof" (1.2.54), while an eyewitness commander called him "Valour's minion" (1.2.19) for his bravery in fighting for Duncan. Just as Macbeth deserves some credit for being self-aware enough to recognize when he's harboring criminal thoughts and making moral and intellectual efforts to put an end to them, he deserves praise for mustering the courage to reject destiny in a way that, despite resembling evil, restores his dwindling valour when he's terrified of losing his crown and on the verge of spiritual damnation:

Rather than so, come fate into the list,

And champion me to th' utterance! (3.1.72-73)

His final words, "Yet I will try the last," are those of a heroic figure (5.8.32). When he makes the decision to murder Duncan and Banquo, his own words embody his religiosity, although subtly yet fiercely, making it more credible. In reference to Duncan's death-bell being rung by Lady Macbeth, he states:

Hear it not, Duncan; for it is a knell

That summons thee to heaven or to hell. (2.1.63-64)

His last words regarding Banquo were, "If it finds heaven, must find out to-night," spoken just before Banquo was killed (3.1.142). Even though the witches warned Macbeth about Macduff, the first prophecy predicted his death, and Birnam Wood had already reached Dunsinane, Macbeth resolves to spare Macduff, displaying his kindness—but it is too late and has no impact:

Of all men else I have avoided thee:

But get thee back; my soul is too much charg'd

With blood of thine already. (5.8.4-6)

Because this is his final opportunity to demonstrate compassion and to convince himself and his conscious mind that he has not descended to the lowest level of irredeemable crime, his sense of shame motivates him to be kind. It is clear from Macbeth's later appeal to the doctor to restore Scotland to its "sound and pristine health" that he is just as patriotic as he was during his defense of the kingdom against the Norwegian invasion (5.3.52).

Imagination: the Link in the Psyche and the Veneer

Rooted in his latent unconscious desires, Macbeth's lyrical imagination vividly portrays the intricate interplay between his unconscious, preconscious, and conscious mind. However, it is

unable to effectively bridge the gaps between the facts and realities since it focuses more on visualizing the truths of life than on seeing the realities. But Shakespeare hides Macbeth's wickedness under the surface of the lyrical flourishes that emerge from Macbeth's fervent thoughts and are shaped by his vivid imagination. The predictions are thus seen as pleasant preludes to the swelling act of the imperial theme in a theatrical context. "Stars, hide your fires" (1.4.50) and "Come, seeling night, / Scarf up the tender eye of pitiful day" (3.2.46-47) are terrible images that Macbeth uses before murdering Duncan and Banquo. The crime scene, the ground, is transformed into "this bank and shoal of time" (1.7.6), and the crime itself is incorporated into our poisoned cup.

On the other hand, Macbeth's realization pictures, the "yellow leaf" image (5.3.23), and the imagery of his excruciating "Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow" speech (5.5.19) eclipse all of the other images—mostly evil—that he utilizes during his criminal deterioration. To prove that Macbeth is not a hopelessly lost man, an evildoer, or an unsalvageable criminal, every quality that he exhibited or was claimed to have had prior to committing his crimes is thus brought back with fresh promise. Examining this deep internal access in his critical essay, "Toward a More Adequate Criticism of Poetic Structure: Macbeth," R. S. Crane argues that what most sharply distinguishes our view of Macbeth from that of his victims and enemies is that, whereas they see him from the outside only, we also see him throughout the major action of the play from the inside, as he sees himself (188). Crane further notes that what we see thus is a moral spectacle the emotional quality of which, for the impartial observer, is not too far removed from the tragic *dynamis* defined in Aristotle's *Poetics*.

Multidimensionalities of Macbeth's Hamartia

For Macbeth to emerge undeniably as a tragic hero and not as a plain and depraved criminal, the playwright purposefully makes the tragic hero's *hamartia* multifaceted and complex, so it is very significant to assess the proportions of his own free will, fate, and Lady Macbeth's influences. When Macbeth is at his most self-aware and rational, spiritually and legally he says that his ambition is the sole thing that drove him to kill Duncan:

I have no spur
To prick the sides of my intent, but only
Vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itself
And falls on the other. (1.7.25-28)

He experiences a series of successes and failures until he claims to be battling the supernatural, which represents his current conscious state and has awoken his preconscious ambition. The supernatural soliciting cannot be ill, cannot be good, in contrast to the happy prologues that precede them. Anxious thoughts of murder must be put to rest. But Macbeth's unconscious mind is so powerful that it gives him visual hallucinations with a dagger and audio hallucinations like "Macbeth does murder sleep" (2.2.35). However, Macbeth becomes conscious of his unconscious desire in the dagger-hallucination scene, noting after a period of profound confusion, "It is the bloody business which informs / Thus to mine eyes" (2.1.48-49). This delusion shows how strong his unconscious desire was in causing the tragic event to happen. In his study, "The Capital Difficulty of Macbeth," Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch contends that Shakespeare transforms a criminal into a tragic hero by having Macbeth go to his crime under some fatal hallucination (178). While ambition, the desire to gain the crown, is the sole driving force in Macbeth's unconscious mind, he is driven by two additional impulses in his conscious mind. Not only does Macbeth place a high value on the supernatural beings, but he

also holds them intensely accountable for his downfall, proving that the predictions were a driving force behind his ambitious and immoral actions. "I have learn'd by the perfect'st report, they have more in them than mortal knowledge," he says to Lady Macbeth (1.5.2-3).

The murder of Duncan was Macbeth's tragic deed, but the prophecy of the witches compels him to kill Banquo as well. Their initial "bloody" advice motivates him to murder Macduff's loved ones. It is fair that Macbeth holds the witches responsible for their role, exclaiming:

Infected be the air whereon they ride,
And damn'd all those that trust them! (4.1.138-139)

And in his ultimate enlightenment he says:

And be these juggling fiends no more believ'd,
That palter with us in a double sense. (5.8.19-20)

In these accusations, however, Macbeth focuses on believing their vague forecasts rather than on their actual complicity, which is Lady Macbeth's responsibility.

Although she is only involved in the first murder, Lady Macbeth is complicit in the crime because she turns Macbeth's ambition into a choice, his decision into determination, and finally his resolve into action. She advises him to "look like the innocent flower, / But be the serpent under't" (1.5.64-65), a disguise of hypocrisy, and Macbeth uses it to his advantage when he goes to kill Duncan, even though Banquo may have stopped him beforehand. Even after Macbeth says, "We will proceed no further in this business" (1.7.31), she refuses to back down and uses a horrific vision of an infanticide to drive home the importance of Macbeth's promise. Poking Macbeth's bravery and manliness whenever they're on the decline is her biggest role in his fatal conduct. She urges him to "screw your courage to the sticking-place"

(1.7.60) whenever he is afraid of failing, and she won't allow him to let his goal be paralyzed by fear. With his bravery so strengthened, Macbeth never lets his guard down until carrying out his wife's plot to kill Duncan, resolving:

I am settled, and bend up

Each corporal agent to this terrible feat. (1.7.79-80)

Similar to Macbeth, Lady Macbeth does not have the witches' active assistance in Duncan's murder, which would have made their part more prominent than hers. The witches bring Macbeth's ambition to the forefront of his consciousness, amplifying it, and Lady Macbeth helps transform it into criminal action; this is the major component of Macbeth's *hamartia*. Crimes perpetrated by a criminal whose driving force is entangled in a cosmic triangle involving the human mind, the supernatural, and the criminal himself captivate the imagination more than any simple criminal act could. Macbeth's *hamartia* is unlike any other, yet his misdeeds are similar to all.

Shakespeare's Dramatic Contrivances for the Rescue

The three parts of Shakespeare's tragic hero's *hamartia* that are known as the "mitigating circumstances" in today's judicial system appear to have been included on purpose. Tragic hero Macbeth murders Duncan—a gracious visitor, a competent ruler, a sleeping kinsman—as his principal tragic act. Macbeth is more of a villain than a hero, yet he is undeniably the tragic hero when he kills Macduff's "wife, children, servants, all that could be found" (4.3.211-212). The other killings, which have terrible ramifications of their own, are accelerated by his vengeance, which is necessitated by Duncan's death. Tragically, Macbeth's ambition to become king lies at the root of all these killings. Killing Banquo and attempting to kill Fleance are unlawful acts, but they are necessary to disprove a part of the witches'

prophecy and safeguard the crown from Banquo's descendants. Despite the fact that the witches just warned him about Macduff, he unfairly punishes the defenseless members of his family and castle for Macduff's crime—defection to the enemy force. The audience views the first two crimes as less serious since they are not committed just for the purpose of committing a crime. Because of the fundamental connection between cause and effect, these three tragic acts—treason and murder—illustrate the tragic hero's unavoidable demise as a result of a fatal mistake. Shakespeare uses the flexibility of a dramatist to downplay Macbeth's guilt. Offstage, Duncan has been murdered. Macbeth isn't there when Banquo and Macduff's family members are killed, and he forbids Banquo to strongly impeach Macbeth before he dies.

The Peripeteia

William Shakespeare reduces Macbeth's crime even more by outlining a strange and complicated *peripeteia* of his tragic hero's fate. In his pursuit of being a calm and joyful monarch, Macbeth murders sleep, peace, and happiness. He achieves material success but falls into a deep melancholy emotionally. Paradox is an inevitable part of *peripeteia*, but in Macbeth's case it does more than that; it causes him to undergo a number of significant psychological changes. Macbeth desires to annihilate global peace in addition to deteriorating into a serial killer whose victims are never named. The man's conscious and unconscious selves are going through a classic breakdown, but this is what he wants:

But let the frame of things disjoint, both the worlds suffer,

Ere we will eat our meal in fear, and sleep

In the affliction of these terrible dreams

That shake us nightly. (3.2.16-19)

This proves that he is aware of his reversal, which he had hinted at before, if vaguely, and that it implies that he has now come to terms with his tragic conduct, his illegal acts. The tragic hero gains renown and is elevated from the lowest position of a criminal to the lofty firmament of a tragic hero, from which he will inevitably fall. This knowledge is bestowed to him.

The Unique Anagnorisis of Macbeth

The tragic hero's *peripeteia* does not closely follow his *anagnorisis* in *Macbeth* and *King Lear*, but it does in *Othello* and Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus*—the "most effective form of anagnorisis"—according to Aristotle. But tragic hero *anagnorisis* is pervasive in *Macbeth*, and it ought to have been multifaceted as well, as Macbeth's tragic mistake is complex. *Anagnorisis* is so pervasive that it helps paint Macbeth as a sad hero despite his criminal past. In addition, his tragic hero status is diminished by the lack of multidimensionality in his analysis of his very complicated *hamartia*. The spectator is captivated by the breathtaking tension generated by the ongoing fight between these two opposing elements of his *anagnorisis*. This conflict adds to the play's tragic tone and makes Macbeth more tragic hero-like by showing him as a fallen human, not superhuman, with a lack of self-control and knowledge that, while sufficient to detect his crimes, is insufficient to stop them or even to make him aware of the complexity of his tragic defect.

Among Macbeth's threefold *hamartia*, the role of the witches stands out as particularly pervasive to him. Aware that "This supernatural soliciting / Cannot be ill, cannot be good" (1.3.130-131) before carrying out the principal tragic act—the murder of Duncan—he did not hesitate. "And damn'd all those that trust them!" (4.1.139), he warns everyone after the secondary terrible act, the murder of Banquo, and after coming face to face with the witches a second time. Macbeth finally starts to actively and genuinely grasp the witches' malevolent

ambiguity after the third tragic act, the slaughter of Macduff's family, and when Birnam Wood approaches Dunsinane. He says:

To doubt th' equivocation of the fiend
That lies like truth. (5.5.42-43)

Also, the birth-prophecy of the witches is finally and clearly explained. Macbeth notes, "And be these juggling fiends no more believ'd" (5.8.19); that is, those who "palter with us in a double sense" (5.8.20), meaning that they both keep and violate promises. No one should be surprised that Macbeth blames the witches for his terrible act, but he doesn't recognize how his ambition, stoked by his wife, contributed. Even though Macbeth knew that killing someone cannot "trammel up the consequence" (1.7.3) and that justice is "even-handed" (1.7.10), seeing Banquo's ghost had almost given him the conviction that "blood will have blood" (3.4.121). He murdered Duncan because of this knowledge. Killing Duncan makes him realize he "had most need of blessing" (2.2.31), and he knows the devil, man's "common enemy," has stolen his "eternal jewel" (3.1.68) before he chooses to murder Banquo. After deciding to assassinate Banquo, he discovers the futility of becoming king the hard way:

Better be with the dead,
Whom we, to gain our peace, have sent to peace,
Than on the torture of the mind to lie
In restless ecstasy. (3.2.19-22)

When Macbeth is able to articulate his place in human society, he rediscovers who he is: a man who has traded in the good things in life—honor, love, obedience, and a legion of friends—for the bad things—curses, lip service, and flattery. In his essay, "The Milk of

Concord: An Essay on Life Themes in Macbeth," G. Wilson Knight states that Macbeth at the last, by self-knowledge, attains grace (128).

The most astounding thing about Macbeth is not his understanding of himself but of life and death, the two biggest mysteries in the universe. He thinks he will live "the lease of nature" (4.1.99) once the witches trick him. He has lived long enough to feel a flutter of desire for life before the second wave of predictions even hint at fulfillment. It is when Lady Macbeth commits suicide, unrepentant but overcome by remorse, that he experiences this revelation most visibly and violently:

Out, out, brief candle!

Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player

That struts and frets his hour upon the stage

And then is heard no more. It is a tale

Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,

Signifying nothing. (5.5.23-28)

You can't help but feel sorry for a man who, in a dignified posture, expresses with such passion and poetry the transience and meaninglessness of frantic life, the pointlessness of pompous acts, and the internal struggle between id and ego, conscience and action, all because he took a wrong turn. The insight and anguish that Macbeth experiences, which are conveyed here solemnly yet whose poignancy and weakness are plain to see, are apparent in his remark:

And all our yesterdays have lighted fools

The way to dusty death. (5.5.22-23)

In this scene, Macbeth alludes to his and Lady Macbeth's previous naiveté as the cause of their vengeful demise and the shame it has brought upon all humanity. The entire speech about "tomorrow and tomorrow," which stems from Lady Macbeth's death, is equally applicable to both of them. The ideas of naiveté, deceit, ambition, fury, counseling, and suffering all suggest that Macbeth is expressing his unconscious realization of their shared history, which includes Lady Macbeth's complicity in his tragic crime. The tragic hero Macbeth experiences the tragedy of his own internal struggle between his conscious and unconscious selves. Both Macbeth's deadly flaw—his powerful preconscious ambition—and his unconscious anguish are hinted at by his dagger-hallucinations and the "murdering sleep" hallucinations. His ego represents his rational and reality-oriented faculties, which try to rein in his desire to do things that are illegal, while his superego represents his internalized moral restraints, guilt, and conscience; his id includes his instinctual ambition and desire for power.

Death as the Cathartic Agent

Tragic heroes often meet their end in death, the climax of their ordeals. Macbeth has committed his crimes on purpose, and he has endured immense pain, both intentionally and unintentionally, throughout. It is a sorry sight to see Duncan murdered, and Macbeth fears his hands "will rather / The multitudinous seas incarnadine" (2.2.61-62). To jolt Macbeth's conscience, his unconscious desire for justice conjures forth the dreadful shadow of Banquo's ghost, which shows the unreal mock'ry that led to Banquo's death. Following the discovery of Duncan's body, Macbeth laments, "Had I but died an hour before this chance, / I had liv'd a blessed time" (2.3.92-93). Analyzing this emotional trajectory in his essay, "Shakespeare's Tragic Villain," Wayne C. Booth notes that scene after scene of suffering and self-torture follows all three murders (184). Booth argues that these are contradictory circumstances that Shakespeare created to show that Macbeth is still somehow sympathetic (185). By his own

actions, "the season of all natures, sleep" (3.4.140) is destroyed, and he has "put rancours in the vessel of [his] peace" (3.1.66). He is, as he admits, "supp'd full with horrors" (5.5.13).

Also, he looks to be full of the milk of human kindness after making these remarks; he wants to save Macduff since he is pitiful. Thus, the audience's feelings of sympathy and terror reach a climax with his death, following intense mental torment and early regeneration. This is because the wounds Macbeth inflicted on Duncan's body resemble a break in nature. His heroic potential has been lost by Macbeth's retributive devastation, which has entered the scene of ruin. Despite the powers above having punished him for his sins, a feeling of terrible waste still lingers over their clouded thoughts. Reflecting on this tragic loss in *Shakespearean Tragedy*, A. C. Bradley states that the tragedy is not that it expels evil, but that it wastes good (302). Macbeth has nearly killed his perfect conscience in addition to murdering others, and as a result, he suffers tremendously until a catastrophic death offers an ultimate balm on his "compunctious visitings of nature" (1.5.45). This ending satisfies the audience's sense of justice but also evokes an overwhelming emotion of pity. Unlike Oedipus, who commits crime primarily out of an individual's foolishness, he is not solely what Aristotle refers to as the undeserving sufferer, as T. S. Dorsch notes in his commentary on the *Poetics* (48). A contemporary Renaissance man with free choice, he embodies the tragic hero archetype from Shakespeare. Again using Aristotelian terminology, Macbeth is just a guy like us, and this is why we feel more sympathy and anxiety for him. In his critical analysis, "Macbeth and Oedipus," W. H. Auden observes that every member of the audience knows that the possibility of becoming a Macbeth exists in his own nature (221).

Conclusion

The dramatic quest of an individual soul for its ideal circumstances is portrayed by Shakespeare in *Macbeth*. Macbeth's goal is commendable, but he takes a severe risk in its

pursuit. Murdering people teaches him the ultimate truths about life and death: that the former consists of living a simple and decent existence, and the latter of murdering someone for reasons that are unnatural and ambitious. Thus, his tragic journey is comprised of his preconscious attempts to understand his unconscious mind, reconcile it with his conscious mind, and integrate his conscience and actions despite the terrible and constant battle between these pairs of sinister extrinsic elements and harmonizable and synchronizable contrarities. This is demonstrated in every facet of Macbeth's tragic hero character, and his tragic hero status is further solidified by the eventual psychological resolution of his psychological voyage, which expiates all of his crimes.

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