

The Prospective play of Villainy in Shakespearean Plays *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*

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The aim of this paper is to study the villainy in Shakespeare's plays *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*. *Hamlet*, a great tragic play has a definite form. The first movement of the play is an act of exposition. It exposes the murderer, the villainy of the murderer and the duty of an avenger. It may even be called the Ghost's Act for the ghost predominates the first few scenes and it is through this supernatural power that everything is exposed and revealed to the avenger as well as the audience. It lays the foundation of the revenge to be taken by the next of kin of the murdered person. It presents Claudius as the 'mighty opposer' of Hamlet, as the villain of the play. The play *Hamlet* thereby shows the development of the personality of Hamlet, the full exposition of the secondary theme, and Hamlet's tragic errors. Hamlet shows a gradual development in character. Madness is a pretension on the part of him to find out the truth and throughout the pretension enacts the play *The Mousetrap* to confirm Claudius' guilt. The play confirms the king Claudius' guilt. In spite of that Hamlet is inactive to take revenge due to irresolution. Hamlet delays in his action of avenging the murder. He refuses to kill Claudius at prayer, and kills Polonius on an impulse. This error of Hamlet accounts for his journey to England. As T.S Eliot has said of the problem in objective correlative, so has been, and another portrayal of villainous acts predicts through the protagonist Hamlet's killing of Polonius, and through it Hamlet, who has to avenge his father's death, becomes a victim of revenge by another son, for killing a father. Laertes, Polonius' son now wants to avenge his father's death and is misled by Claudius into adopting foul means to kill Hamlet. Meanwhile a change occurs in Hamlet's character. After his escape from the pirates, Hamlet returns to Denmark, as a wiser, more mature and truly philosophic man. The short scuffle in the graveyard between the two avengers leads immediately to the momentous match to challenge one another's strength and hastens the end of the action. The action of the play comes to an end with the death of almost all the important characters except Horatio and Fortinbras. Thus, there is a gradual development in the progress of the plot. Hamlet, a witty and energetic genius

deteriorates in character as the play progresses, but regains his lost balance of mind with an added strength at the end of the play before he dies.

The King of Denmark, Hamlet's uncle can be called the play's antagonist. The villain Claudius is a calculating and yet an ambitious politician, driven by his sexual appetites and his lust for power, but he occasionally shows signs of guilt and human feeling—his love for Gertrude, for instance, seems sincere. The two great tragedies, *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*, are Shakespeare's psychopathological dramas. These plays consider human characteristics under the light of conscience as the essence and origin of judging and punishing mechanism that gain a high level of significance. Shakespeare demonstrates that the sin of man originates from his unconscious dark desires which may be repressed by his reason and healthy mind. When one reads two of Shakespeare's greatest and most widely-read plays, *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*, one can find one selves. He knows more about human heart and mind. His heroes are active agents in bringing awareness to the people. Although Shakespeare had a short life but the wealth of writings he left behind is read, studied and discussed more today than ever before. These tragedies are read and displayed to audience, stirring their imagination, informing them of the realities of man and life, strengthening their faith in a brighter future and cultivating humanity, passion and affection for good and lightness against darkness and evil. His plays deal with human possibilities at a profound level, and therefore attain universality. When one read or watch *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*, one may share in the tragic emotions of pity or sympathy and fear. That's why one have fellow-feeling for the suffering of others, one's deepest conception about right and wrong, good and evil, one's hate for foul deed, and an elevated sense of dignity and the admirable potentialities of human spirit. The two plays accounts for a faithful mirror highlighting human characteristics in the sense of laying them bare in all their great variety up to readers and audience imply that literature can help to acquire wisdom and moral lessons. Whereby, one can better guard against the barbarism and have a better life. Shakespeare teaches and warns his readers how to trust one's surroundings and the people who live with oneself. In addition, he warns how to use one's mind in a best way.

A.C Bradley comments on the appearance of "ghost" in the play Hamlet as that the ghost in Hamlet strikes the imagination as the representation of the hidden power, the messenger of the divine justice upon the expiation of offences. It is to be said that, in revenge play the appearance of ghost is a significant part to inform about the wicked persons to the hero

of the story. The ghost was the sole device manipulating the characters for taking revenge and therefore in *Hamlet* the ghost like figure has given the unknown information about king Hamlet's murder, the ghost told that the murderer was no one but his own brother Claudius and told his son to take revenge against him. In *Hamlet*, the opening scene was the most eeriest, full with enigmatic environments and shrouded with frightening moments. The ghost of king Hamlet, the late king of Denmark, is a manifested shadowy appearance, who wears his royal dress and carries the embellished armour keeping in light the identifiable characteristics of his persona. At first Horatio saw the ghost of late king Hamlet and he didn't believe in his own eyes and therefore he was dumbstruck. The questions asked to the ghost by Horatio are kept unreplyed. Later the news of ghost's appearance reached to Hamlet. The real tension of the play started when the ghost of the late king told Hamlet about his murderer. The ghost told to Hamlet that it was his own brother Claudius who did kill him actually. From that time Hamlet was determined and decided to take revenge on his uncle Claudius. Hamlet did concentration and started to ponder on his goal of taking revenge. He was having the strong tenacity to kill Claudius as he usurped the throne of his father unlawfully whereas the general people of the kingdom had no clue about this cruel truth. The ghost also informed Hamlet that he will be the one who can take revenge on the murderer and that's why Hamlet felt importance to take revenge with full of his consent.

“And so i am revenged. That would be scanned: A villain kills my father, and for that, i his sole son, this same villain send to heaven” (Act III, Scene iii).

These words of Hamlet has created the zeal of determination for taking revenge, and simultaneously the spectators of Hamlet became more curious to know that what will happen in next stages of Hamlet's revenge motif. Toward the end of the first act of *Hamlet*, immediately after the Ghost has gone, one have the following words from the mouth of Hamlet: “O villain, villain, smiling, damned villain! My tables,-meet it is I set it down, That one may smile, and smile, and be a villain; At least I'm sure it may be so in Denmark” (Act I Scene V).

Lady Macbeth exacts a penetrating personality in the play and can be assumed that she is the villain, or antagonist, of the play. Unlike Macbeth, who deliberates over whether or not to kill Duncan and who wrestles with loyalty to his king, Lady Macbeth is single-minded in her lust for power but draws in her husband to this fateful exhibition of lust for power. She has no loyalty to any cause beyond her own ambition, and is willing to manipulate her husband to achieve what she wants. Her desire for Macbeth to be king doesn't stem from a belief he'd be

a good ruler; she wants him to be king because she wants to be queen. As a woman, queen is the most powerful role she can hope for in the court. Unlike Macbeth, who hopes there's a way he can become king without taking action himself, Lady Macbeth immediately accepts that murder is necessary to achieve her goals, and prays for the resolve necessary to commit the act: "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."

However, if looked more carefully at the difference between who Lady Macbeth is and who she wants to be, one begins to see a different side of Lady Macbeth, suggesting that she is not as villainous as might have thought. While her boast to Macbeth that, if she had promised to kill her own child, she would have "dashed its brains out" without hesitation is certainly blood-chilling, she is only saying what she *would* do, not telling about something she has actually done. In reality, she is capable of tenderness and warmth. Her wish to be unsexed and request that the spirits take HER milk for gall, so that she can act without remorse, indicate that, rather than lacking compassion, she fears she has too much. In fact, it may be Lady Macbeth, not her husband, who may be too full of the milk of human kindness. Another contrast between what Lady Macbeth says she would do and what she actually does comes on the night of Duncan's murder. While waiting for Macbeth to kill Duncan, she admits that if he had not resembled her father as he slept, she would have done it. Again, she is portraying herself as ruthless and violent, but her action (or lack of action) tells a different story. Maybe she would have killed Duncan if he didn't look like her father; maybe not – all that is known is that, given the opportunity to kill the king, she couldn't go through with it. Her previous wish that her blood would stop up the access and passage to remorse has not come true. When Macbeth announces Duncan's death, she faints. One reading is that her faint is faked to distract from Macbeth's shaky story. But if the faint is real, it suggests she just now realizes the truth of what they've done, and is overwhelmed by her husband's ability to kill not only Duncan but also the attendants, and lie so easily about it.

After Duncan's murder, Lady Macbeth's role is of comforter and protector of Macbeth, rather than instigator of murder, and her character becomes more sympathetic. Immediately after the murder, Macbeth says, "to know my deed, t'were best not know myself," and the rest of the play sees him becoming further estranged from himself and his essential humanity. Lady Macbeth, in contrast, stops pretending to be someone she's not, and begins admitting who she actually is. She recognizes the error of their actions, saying, "Tis safer to be that which we

destroy/Than by destruction dwell in doubtful joy.” They’ve killed Duncan, but the murder only made them miserable, and in some ways they’d be better off dead. However, she continues to put on a brave face for her husband, encouraging him to put the past behind him (“what’s done is done”) and stop worrying. When Macbeth sees Banquo’s ghost at the banquet, Lady Macbeth again covers for him. But, sensing her regret, he hides his plans to kill Lady Macduff and her children. Not only has Macbeth become a stranger to himself, he is also a stranger to his wife, who now has no ally and is isolated in her guilt.

The last time one see Lady Macbeth, she is raving about blood on her hands, signalling that she is a victim of her husband and her own overwrought emotional state. Over the course of the play one have seen her evolve from a crafty manipulator to a guilt-ridden casualty of her husband’s ambition who has lost all agency over her own life. Her husband is off murdering more innocent people in his quest to hold onto his ill-gotten crown, while Lady Macbeth, who hoped to share in his glory, has been abandoned. Her obsession with cleaning the phantom blood off her hands signals that she has been just as tainted as Macbeth by his murders, even though she did not commit them herself, nor has she benefitted from them. While Lady Macbeth is far from blameless for her role in inciting her husband to action, she ends the play a far more sympathetic character than she began.

At the start of the play, Macbeth was what looked to be a hero. There are numerous great characteristics to show that Macbeth is a hero such as him being loyal, kind, and overall having a good reputation. First, Macbeth had a good reputation. The idea spoken consisted of Macbeth to be a “valiant cousin, worthy gentleman” (Act 1, Scene 2) by Duncan, the king. This means King Duncan is admiring Macbeth for his remarkable struggles in the war, by calling him ‘valiant cousin’ which indicates he is in close relationship with King Duncan. Also, by saying he is a worthy gentlemen, Duncan is saying he is an honourable fighter. Second, Macbeth is a very loyal man. “Till he faced the slave; which ne’er shook hands, nor bade him farewell to him, till he unseen him from the nave to th’ chops, and fixed his head upon our battlements.” (Act 1, Scene 2) This quotation explains just how loyal Macbeth was to King Duncan and his country.

He put his life in danger to fight in the battle against the enemy Macdonwald. This was the last battle he fought after meeting the three witches. Last, Macbeth was a kind guy. For instance, he showed great love for his wife at the start of the play. When Macbeth wrote letters to Lady Macbeth telling her how he was, what his new thoughts were, and explaining how

much he loved her, he is being a kind and thoughtful man. From all his heroic titles at the beginning it shows Macbeth achieving the 'understanding of a hero as a person noted or admired for their courage or outstanding achievements'. Macbeth's bravery, loyalty, and kindness are absolutely what make Macbeth a heroic character. Macbeth is also a villain in the beginning of the tragedy. A villain is defined to be an evil person who goes by evil approaches to get what he needs. First, Macbeth determines he wants to be King of Scotland. He decided this when the witches predicted that he would be Thane of Cawdor. If the witches never welcomed him King of Scotland at first, he never would have prediction about killing the king. His action directed him to keep shedding people's blood, and was in blood too deep he couldn't go back. Later in the play Macbeth says to Lady Macbeth, "I am in blood / Stepp'd in so far, that, should I wade no more, / Returning were as tedious as go o'er" (Act 3, Scene 4).

Also, he grew more detached from his wife, Lady Macbeth, and made choices without her recognition. For example, when he started to kill innocent families such as the MacDuff family and didn't tell Lady Macbeth. So then he became more cruel in his tactics to stay as the King of Scotland and the public define him as 'This tyrant' (Act 5, Scene 3) and 'A dwarfish thief' (Act 5 Scene 2), by his evil ways. Lastly, during the play, every time Macbeth attempts to attain his ambition, he constantly blocks his respectable qualities in favour of a more wicked approach. This ambition of his points him to develop a troublemaker later in the play, which leads to his downfall and concluding murder by Macduff. For instance, a major evil action Macbeth did was killing King Duncan just so he could become king and gain power. In the book Macbeth stated: "I am settled, and bend up each corporal agent to this terrible feat. Away and mock the time with fairest show, False face must hide what the false heart doth know false face must hide what the false heart doth know" (Act 1, Scene 7). What Macbeth is stating is that he is ready to kill King Duncan, and after he is done he will have to act upon his 'false face' and try not to have the guilt sink in from the truth in his heart. These evil ways proved Macbeth to be very cold hearted and a serial killer. There is no doubt that Macbeth was a villain by his greed, despair, and temptation. Last, Macbeth had a choice to be evil or be a hero. First, the witch's prophecies gave him a choice to make. He could have listened to them or did what he thought was good, but instead he chose evil ways. When Macbeth tries to find the witches in a dark cave, he finds them, and then they show him three ghosts. The first spirit seems as an armed head that says, "Macbeth! Macbeth! Macbeth! beware Macduff; / Beware the thane of Fife." The second spirit is a gory kid that tells Macbeth, "Be bloody, bold, and resolute; laugh to scorn / The power of man, for none born of woman / Shall harm Macbeth." At last, the third

apparition was another child with a crown on his head, telling Macbeth that he “Shall never vanquished be until Great Birnam wood to high Dunsinane Hill / Shall come against him”(Act 4, Scene 1). This false self-assurance Macbeth was given was very significant so he could make his ultimate decision which ended in defeat. Macbeth had his wife’s thoughts too. Lady Macbeth convinced him to commit the murder when he questions the consequences to her.

For Macbeth to be evil, he went with Lady Macbeth telling him he was too ‘un manly’ to kill Duncan and he should do it to become a man and not be a kid. The direct quotation that was used for Macbeth’s wife was “When you durst do it, then you were a man “(Act 1, Scene 7). Macbeth had a lot of decisions to choose the evil way or the hard way. He could have picked the heroic side which meant him still being thane of Caldor and Glamus, being treated nicely by King Duncan, and not feeling guilt by killing innocent people. Macbeth in the end, chose the wicked ways which sooner or later killed off his wife from her extreme guilt. This would not have happened if he had made accurate decisions. Unluckily, this is all triggered by mistreatment, being misled by his loved one, not seeing any enhancements he has made and non-existence love. In conclusion, Macbeth is a complicated character whose human nature means that he retains both good and evil qualities from the start of the play to the finish. He was heroic by being a strong person, a hero to Scotland, a Lord under the instruction of King Duncan, and having no reason to feel hopeless with where he is in life. Macbeth’s bravery, sense of right and wrong and his hesitant method of bad behaviour are as well-known as his evil ambition, cunning and cruelty. Macbeth cannot be argued as being purely heroic or villainous; the difficulty of his character is proven by his vicious inner struggles and powered by his imaginings.

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