



PROBING INTO THE MIND OF THE 'BELLONA'S BRIDEGROOM' WHO TURNED INTO A 'HELL-HOUND': A PSYCHOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF MACBETH'S SOLILOQUIES

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Abstract

This research article delves into the psychological exploration of Macbeth, the tragic protagonist in William Shakespeare's renowned play, Macbeth. Focusing specifically on Macbeth's soliloquies, the study aims to unravel the transformation of the once noble and valiant soldier, described as "Bellona's bridegroom," into a ruthless tyrant, likened to a "hell hound." By closely analysing Macbeth's soliloquies throughout the play, we gain insights into his complex inner thoughts, desires, and motivations, illuminating the psychological processes behind his tragic downfall.

Keywords: soliloquy, conflict, ambition, crime, murder.

Introduction:

According to Aristotle, much like the modern existentialists, the essence of a man lies in his actions; his potentiality, in truth, is but an elusive shadow, a mere glimmer amidst the realm of the unattainable. From this vantage point, Macbeth ought to be forever branded as a malefactor, for his deeds possess an inherent criminality. Nevertheless, Shakespeare, with his artistic aims, harnesses the Renaissance tenet of

latent capacities dwelling within a man, and thus manages to elicit a measure of compassion for Macbeth. He internalizes the theatrical narrative, and through the soliloquies, the passionate expressions of Macbeth's inner turmoil, he projects a dormant greatness that remains tragically stifled in reality. Hence, it can be argued that Macbeth leaves an indelible impression as a hero, primarily due to the profound soliloquies he articulates.

Discussion

The witches in Macbeth ardently embody the prophetic oracular role, and in unison, through their resounding declaration of "Fair is foul and foul is fair," as well as their collective scheme to manifest themselves before Macbeth once the "*hurly -burly is done*", they assume a choric function. Their proclamation of malevolence is accompanied by a profound contemplation of temporal inevitability: "*look into the seeds of time/ And say which grain will grow and which will not*". Macbeth, in essence, emerges as the marionette of everlasting forces permeating the realm of the theatrical narrative. Paradoxically, it is not the witches themselves but Macbeth who surrenders his consciousness to the enslaving grip of their prophetic utterances. They immortalize the deepest desires that he struggles to acknowledge, even within the recesses of his own psyche. The witches, with their incendiary influence, ignite the imaginations of the perceptive and the sensitive, thereby engendering within Macbeth a tempestuous maelstrom of treacherous thoughts. His seemingly casual remark about the weather - "*So foul and fair a day I have not seen*" - inadvertently aligns him with the witches' mystic energy. The news of his sudden ascension to the title of Thane of Cawdor, an unforeseen realization of the witches' prediction, inflames Macbeth's aspirations, and the notion of regicide plunges him into a whirlpool of agitated contemplation.

Macbeth's nascent ambition reveals itself in its first glorious bloom when he utters, "*The greatest is behind*." A moment of unforeseen prophecy fulfilled stirs within him a turbulent clash between his vaulting aspirations - "*the swelling act of imperial theme*" - and the ghastly apparition of himself as the murderer of Duncan. Neither his corporeal form nor his intellectual faculties maintain a firm grasp: "*My thought... shakes... my single state of man*" - an overwhelming disintegration of the psyche, a resounding disarray in the face of

moral conflict. The sickening undulation of: "*This supernatural soliciting/ Cannot be ill; cannot be good*" - consummates the impression of a phantasmagoric nightmare, a grotesque chimera. This constitutes the genesis of Macbeth's malevolence - previous cogitations of ambition might have lingered, the notion of regicide may have tantalized his mind, but now, for the first time, he feels the impending weight of its tangible actuality. He embraces the delusions of grandeur proffered by the witches, forsaking the genuine honours earned through loyal service to Duncan. A fatal misjudgement transpires as he confuses counterfeit semblance for genuine existence - "*And nothing is what is not*." Thus commences Macbeth's self-annihilating odyssey, ironically believed to be the path to self-attainment.

Macbeth finds solace solely in the commonplace notions of loyalty, employing them as a refuge for his true self, as he proclaims, "*The service and loyalty I owe, in doing pays itself*." He stands poised to surrender the well-deserved accolades he has garnered, for they pale in comparison to the grandeur of attaining the pinnacle of regal authority, a distinction now attainable only through the artful veiling of his ambitions.

The burdensome weight of mustering the courage to commit murder amplifies the fragmentation of his very being, and were it possible, he would endeavour to veil his nefarious intentions even from the depths of his own consciousness: "*Stars hide your fires/ Let not light see my black and deep desires*." The ascension of Malcolm to the esteemed position of Prince of Cumberland, in Macbeth's perception, represents an insurmountable precipice upon which he '*must fall down*'. Thus, he steadfastly resolves to surmount this formidable barrier.

Macbeth finds himself torn asunder by the insidious thoughts of Duncan's assassination. Within the recesses of his troubled mind, he ponders the notion that if

this heinous act carried no earthly consequences, he would find complete satisfaction. The existential question of an afterlife would be disregarded, for in this fleeting and precarious realm of existence, he and his accomplice could simply evade the consequences and hurdles of the future: "...but this blow/Might be the be all and the end all-here/ But here, upon this bank and shoal of time/We'd jump the life to come." Macbeth yearns for a swift and conclusive termination of the "assassination," whereupon its completion, he wishes it could be swiftly consigned to history. His contemplation lingers upon a perfect murder, one that would entangle the repercussions and secure "success" with its finality. He is entrenched upon the throne of a bitter inner conflict—a veritable battleground of conflicting impulses. The mere fact that he must painstakingly assemble a multitude of reasons to dissuade himself from committing the deed serves as a testament to the profound allure it holds over him.

To the Elizabethans, the betrayal of trust equated to embodying the treachery of Judas. Moreover, Duncan was not only a relative but also a cherished guest within Macbeth's realm, and by spilling his blood, Macbeth would undoubtedly betray the trust placed upon him as a loyal subject. This moral and religious consideration echoes forth in his words, "First, as I am his kinsman and his subject...then as his host/Who should against his murderer shut the door/Not bear the knife myself." The apprehension of the consequences deters him, for engaging in such an act would render him vulnerable to the malevolent forces that might take inspiration from his bloody instruction and turn it against him.

Furthermore, Duncan had ruled with benevolence and magnanimity, earning the adoration of his subjects. The mournful demise of this virtuous monarch would provoke an outpouring of compassion, as Macbeth himself laments, "...his virtues/Will plead like angels.../And

Pity.../Shall blow the horror deed in every eye." While the slaying of a tyrant might elicit indifference or even approval from some quarters, the murder of Duncan would breed immense difficulties for his potential successors. Amidst the multitude of conflicts and concerns plaguing Macbeth, the moral dimension towers above all else, relentlessly asserting itself. Macbeth cannot simply expunge God from his consciousness. Thus, immediately after the dastardly act, he is seized with regret, a pang of remorse that renders him incapable of uttering the sacred "Amen": "I had most need of blessing and Amen/Stuck in my throat."

Having assimilated the virtues emblematic of Lady Macbeth's resolute nature, he embarks upon the treacherous path of regicidal butchery, his taut nerves constricted to the very precipice of action. It is at this zenith of mental strain that his fevered mind begets the spectre of a dagger, an ethereal apparition crafted by the forge of his afflicted consciousness: "...art thou but/A dagger of the mind, a false creation/ Proceeding from the heat oppressed brain." In this disarray, the word 'oppressed' resonates with the torment that besets Macbeth's cogitations prior to the heinous act. The discord between his trembling hands and bewildered gaze becomes apparent: "Mine eyes are made the fools o' th' other senses/ Or else worth all the rest: I see thee still." Yet, the imagery conceived by his thoughts transcends the realm of moral quandaries and plunges deep into the abyss of murder, though he possesses the fortitude to dismiss it as a phantasmal mirage, pronouncing, - "There's no such thing". A grim acceptance of the unspeakable horror that awaits pervades his consciousness, as he contemplates the malevolent connection forged between the veiled night and the impending transgression. Even the celestial bodies, as commanded by his whims, veil their radiance, adding to the desolation that shrouds the nefarious deed. The apparent demise of nature, as the mundane world

slumbers under the nocturnal cloak, befits the unnaturalness of Macbeth's actions, transforming his mind into a theatre wherein the performance of wickedness unfolds. The personification of '*wither'd Murther*' unequivocally etches Macbeth as an embodiment of murderous intent within the annals of moral discourse. The adjective '*wither'd*' reinforces the notion that evil is inherently barren, foreshadowing the attainment of a '*fruitless crown*' that Macbeth shall, alas, procure for himself. These fleeting moments in Macbeth's existence mirror those of an entrant into the realm of deceit, a sleepwalker ensnared by the puppet strings of wickedness, inexorably drawn toward his sinister machinations, resembling a spectral apparition.

As the chime of the bell reverberates in the air, Macbeth goes to kill Duncan. The ensuing couplet, adorned with poetic grace, encapsulates the dire consequences that await Macbeth: "...for it is a knell/That summons thee to Heaven or to Hell"- serving as a profound commentary on his descent into darkness, as he ruthlessly obliterates the once sacrosanct boundary separating Heaven from Hell. Alas, despite this transgression, Macbeth averts his gaze from the gruesome act, allowing his thoughts to swiftly shift from "*I go*" to the relief of '*it's done*' purposefully leaving unvoiced the horrific actions perpetrated by his own hands.

After the murder of Duncan, Macbeth won the crown but has lost its royalty. The presence of Banquo serves as a contrast to his own nature. The 'royalty' of Banquo's nature arises from a harmonious balance of his faculties- the proper subordination of his courage to wisdom. He is an integrated personality for which Macbeth feels inferior and wants to kill him- "To be thus is nothing/ But to be safely thus."

Following the regicide of Duncan, Macbeth attained the coveted crown, yet it lamentably eluded him its inherent majesty. Within this context, the presence of Banquo

emerges as a poignant juxtaposition to Macbeth's own essence. Banquo's intrinsic '*royalty*' emanates from a consummate equilibrium in his faculties—a serene fusion wherein his valour dutifully submits to sagacity. His persona epitomizes an integrated embodiment that instigates Macbeth acutely conscious of his own inferiority, to harbour lethal intentions

In a tragic display of political misjudgement, Macbeth commits a grave error in his decision to eliminate Banquo. Paradoxically, Banquo's continued existence poses no threat to Macbeth's safety; rather, it serves as a safeguard. Alas, Macbeth remains oblivious to the irrationality that shrouds his intentions, for he is unable to perceive the incongruity that lies therein. Entranced by the witches' prophetic words, which had previously earned his trust, he finds no grounds to alter those prophecies when it comes to Banquo. Macbeth, alas, cannot fathom the stark disparity between the bountiful fertility promised to Banquo as the progenitor of a '*line of kings*' and the barrenness that plagues his own monarchy, symbolized by the "*barren sceptre*" that slips through his grasp.

The process of dehumanization has commenced upon Macbeth's psyche. Prior to his heinous act of regicide against Duncan, he wrestles with the torment of his own conscience. As the necessity to murder Banquo arises, Macbeth has swiftly advanced down the path of callousness. He now possesses the audacity to chastise himself for not progressing with sufficient celerity. He invokes the "*seeling night*," yearning for its encompassing darkness to shroud all in obscurity and grant him liberation from his mortal shackles. However, the abyss he has plunged into proves inescapable, enveloping him entirely. The initial seeds of malevolence he sowed have irrevocably bound him to a life of wickedness, forcing him to embrace it as the sole veracity that remains. He apprehends that the torments of conscience

that plagued him are indeed manifestations of the indignant natural order, an inexorable force that reduces him to the core of his humanity. This undeniable bond perpetually keeps him pallid, forever beholden to its grasp.

Macbeth reaches a stage of spiritual death where he finds to his amazement that no horror can horrify him- "*I have supp'd full with horrors/Direness, familiar to my slaughterous thoughts/Cannot once start me.*" This signifies Macbeth's defection from the human camp, his permanent separation from human kindness.

The soliloquy preceding the merciless slaughter of Macduff's kin manifests with unmistakable clarity that his abhorrent plea has been granted. He has metamorphosed into a monstrous being, capable of openly proclaiming his cruel intentions devoid of any moral qualms: "*The castle of Macduff I will surprise/Seize upon Fife, give to th' edge o' th' sword/His wife, his babes, and all unfortunate souls/That trace him in his line*". The degradation of Macbeth appears to have reached its culmination, as evidenced by his anguished cry: "*But no more sights,*" revealing that haunting images continue to torment his psyche. Yet, it is not a genuine human torment, for the agony of discerning between virtue and wickedness has ceased to afflict him. He is conscious that "*all great Neptune's ocean*" cannot cleanse the blood that has besmirched his hands, yet he harbours no intent of retracing his steps; to him, "*returning were as tedious as go o'er.*"

Macbeth attains a state of spiritual demise wherein he astonishingly discovers that no horror can invoke dread within him: "*I have supp'd full with horrors/Direness, familiar to my slaughterous thoughts/Cannot once start me.*" This marks Macbeth's abandonment of the realm of humanity, his permanent detachment from acts of benevolence.

Lady Macbeth's demise ignites within him a sombre introspection on the essence of existence. The phrase "*She should have*

died hereafter" intimates a loss of reverence for her, yet it carries a deeper undertone of lamentation over her abandonment of the shared companionship Macbeth had assumed as his natural entitlement. She ought to have departed at a later time, synchronizing her passing with his realization of the profound insignificance of '*nothing*' - the futility inherent in the relentless succession of morrow. These forthcoming days are counterbalanced by the weighty significance of "*all our yesterdays,*" encapsulating the entirety of recorded time. The light of day has merely guided men to their ultimate demise, for they were foolish in failing to grasp that achieving nothingness is their sole destiny. A fervent impatience resonates within the exclamation, "*Out, out, brief candle! /Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player*" The candle, a precarious source of illumination, was perceived by the fools as a guiding light, yet Macbeth now arrives at the realization that life is a mere semblance, devoid of substantiality. Macbeth, a progeny of life, unequivocally renounces it as "*full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.*" The darkest facets of Macbeth's character emerge as the battle ensues, confronting him with the revelation that he is nothing but a tormented beast, constrained like one "tied to the stake," compelled to engage in a relentless struggle: "*They have tied me to the stake; I cannot fly/ But bear like I must fight the course.*"

Conclusion

The inherent nobility of his sentiments juxtaposed with the consistent criminality of his deeds vividly underscores the profound dichotomy between the external facade of Macbeth and the intricate depths of his inner self. Readers may discern within Macbeth's imaginative utterances an unmistakable parallel to the persona of Satan himself. Macbeth's demise, rather than evoking unadulterated jubilation, engenders a profound sense of lamentation

and a palpable feeling of squandered potential. As they eagerly anticipate a new epoch for Scotland under the rule of Malcolm, they cannot entirely expunge from their consciousness the lingering presence of the "ruined angel" upon whose lifeless frame the nascent structure of this new era is to be erected.

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