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MACBETH'S IDENTITY CRISIS: SHAKESPEARE AS THE SAVIOUR

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Abstract: Shakespeare's *Macbeth* is a highly complex and magnificent tragedy where nemesis descends upon the tragic hero in a true tragic manner. It is as well an excellent crime story with an intricate pattern of crime and punishment. *Macbeth* in a sense is a criminal but he is also a tragic hero because Shakespeare endues him with qualities worthy of a tragic hero, because he has a moral weakness which impels him to criminal thoughts and criminal deeds which are his tragic acts, because his fortune undergoes a reversal, because he realizes his error and consequently suffers immensely and dies. But these tragic qualities of his together with his crimes and punishments are integrated in such adroit dramatic and psychological ways that in spite of degenerating into a criminal he commands pity as a tragic hero. *Macbeth*'s tragedy is that he fools his conscience but cannot kill it for it is deeply, inextricably and poetically rooted in his unconscious. And essentially it is this artifice with which Shakespeare salvages his hero.

Key words: Unconscious; Preconscious; Conscious; Hamartia; Peripeteia; Anagnorisis

Introduction

In recreating *Macbeth* from Holinshed's *Chronicles* Shakespeare confronted the problem of transforming a criminal into a tragic hero. Demonstrating the impulses to degenerate and the instincts to reform, *Macbeth* has not had a sleek descent into criminality. The deeper he drowns, the better he is salvaged because Shakespeare breathes into him a psyche that is tragic because it becomes disintegrated, a soul that embarks on an odyssey to enlightenment because it cannot disregard its innate goodness. Shakespeare utilizes dramatic contrivances to lessen the impact of his hero's villainy, but what he is more interested to do and does more adeptly is to highlight his heroic qualities with recourse to exquisite poetic imagination especially at the most critical stages. The playwright devises a rich and multidimensional hamartia for the tragic hero portraying the extrinsic agents and the consequent peripeteia equally well. The cathartic effect all through the play is made related to the unique anagnorisis of *Macbeth*. The interrelationship and the interaction of *Macbeth*'s unconscious, preconscious and the conscious parts of his psyche pervade the whole play and point to the ways how his identity crisis is resolved.

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The Cause of the Crisis: A Disintegrated Psyche

Innate goodness and aversion to evil sanctify *Macbeth*'s unconscious, but his preconscious once vitiated with ambitiousness impels him to criminal actualization of that ambitiousness. His conscious feebly attempts to disinfect his unconscious and so preconscious hallucinations engender and reach his conscious part of his mind and try to control it. But *Macbeth*'s unconscious and the outside unholy agents will not let him give credence to this. As a result *Macbeth* maintains a peculiar dual nature of a criminal and a hero. But he undoubtedly is a tragic hero, and to vindicate this, the best way is to demonstrate that his innate character and vicissitudes in life followed closely those of a tragic hero of which Aristotle was the best proponent.

Ambition Planted in the Preconscious

Is *Macbeth* guilty of harbouring criminal thoughts of supplanting Duncan by murdering him before he exhibits the early eminence of an Aristotelian tragic hero in the beginning of the play? Though criminal thought paves the way for crimes and detracts from the eminence of a tragic hero it is not counted as crime. And especially when other agents flare up that thought in the conscious state of the mind the tragic heroe's culpability decreases. In *Macbeth*'s case, the tragic act is the criminal act of murdering Duncan which necessitates, illegally but logically, the other two criminal acts of murder. And until he commits these crimes he fluctuates pathetically between thoughts and actions, between id and ego, perilously poised on the fortuitous balance of 'To be or not to be,' not for a just cause like Hamlet but for an untenable cause like personal interest. It is more probable that *Macbeth* was ambitious to be the king but not conscious of it before his encounter with the witches than that it is the witches that have made him commit the tragic act. There can be several arguments to support such a hypothesis.

Firstly, ambition was there in *Macbeth*'s breast, otherwise it could not so intensely and devouringly flare up in him at the mere announcement of the witches' prophecies. *Macbeth*'s murderous thoughts, the only stratagem that appeared to him repeatedly, are spontaneous and natural effects of an army general whose very deportment in the just concluded battle smell of murderous valour, his sword being 'smoked with bloody execution'. Secondly, it did not at all occur to him to ponder whether to supplant Duncan in an evil manner was loyal or treasonous, morally appreciable or reprehensible, a virtuous deed or a criminal act. Unflinching loyalty in his recent defense of Duncan becomes questionable, and then it is to be supposed that ambition was embedded in his preconscious mind. Thirdly, he weighs the accuracy of the witches' prophecies which brings to the surface of his mind his preconscious ambition, 'Say from where you owe this strange intelligence?' His ejaculation, 'Would they had stay'd!', shows how eager he is to know from them the possibility of the fructification of his ambition which has just surfaced. Then, he values more his latent ambition than the mere announcements of the witches. It could not have been incalculable to a person like him who can judge his decisions and act accurately that the title of Thane of Cawdor would be conferred on Banquo or more probably on himself because of their valourous defense of Duncan. He already is the Thane of Glamis, 'By Sinel's death I know I am Thane of Glamis', which is one of the three prophecies of the witches and which is not unknowable to them since it

is not a secret. Thus the importance *Macbeth* attaches to the prophecies, 'The greatest is behind', is exaggerated by *Macbeth* himself who now only reaches for the 'prospect of belief' for his ambition. He almost magnifies the role of fate in 'the swelling act of the imperial theme.'

> If chance will have me king,why, Chance may crown me
> Without my stir. (I.iii.143-44)

But, having more faith in his own action, he is distraught that 'function is smother'd in surmise'. Lastly, his jumping to the idea of murdering Duncan, not suggested in any way by the witches, and his not consulting them or waiting for their help corroborate the assumption that more than the witches it is his ambition which is stronger and more important to him. What the witches do is to raise the preconscious ambition to the conscious state of his mind. AC Bradley observes in this regard that Shakespeare 'appears actually to have taken pains to make the natural psychological genesis of *Macbeth*'s crimes perfectly clear' (Bradley, 1992). Two very important inferences emerge as by-products from this ratiocination. The first is that *Macbeth* has a cogent unconscious which besides occasionally eluding his conscious state of mind has a blinding effect on it and consequently tries to crumble his 'single state of man', his unified and harmonized organization. The second is that he is consciously battling against the preconscious, the 'fantastical murder' which is 'Against the use of nature'. In the twentieth century legal system a criminal's psychological state before the commission of his crime is considered in passing the verdict upon his crime. This legal system is based on a human psychology with which Shakespeare's genius was naturally familiar. Obviously, Shakespeare had no other purpose in delineating such a delicate psychological state of *Macbeth* but to present him as a tragic hero, not as an irredeemable criminal.

Macbeth, according to the description provided by Aristotle in his *Poetics*, is a tragic hero who is neither a wholly impeachable person nor a downright villain, but an eminent man with a moral weakness engendering an ethical flaw, 'the sort of man who is not conspicuous for virtue and justice',but 'enjoys prosperity and a high reputation', and whose miserable fall is due not to 'depravity' but rather to 'some error'(Dorsch, 1965). To accept that *Macbeth* has an inborn ambition which later surfaces in his mind entails the problem of regarding him as depraved which goes against the Aristotelian conception of a tragic hero and which is not admissible as there is no plausible indication whatsoever of that in the text. It should be assumed that his ambition is engendered in his mind as a result of the rebellion Macdonald has established as an example.

Shakespeare Crowning *Macbeth* with Heroic Qualities

Macbeth suffers from the conscious identification of this flaw which act itself is a mark of appreciable character. *Macbeth* has other qualities as well which elevate him to the dignity of a tragic hero. His most prominent quality is his valiance demonstrated in his battles for Duncan; he is described by an eyewitness captain as 'Valour's minion' and by an eyewitness nobleman as 'Bellona's bridegroom, lapp'd in proof '. *Macbeth*'s kindness and religiousness are vindicated by his criminal-minded wife who considers them as impediments to the 'golden round'; she says that *Macbeth*'s nature is 'too full o' the milk of human kindness' and that 'what thou wouldst highly that wouldst thou holily'. And it

is Shakespeare's deft artifice that helps his tragic hero salvage the audience's pity and admiration whenever they are sinking with the numbers and degrees of his crimes. He continues to impart to *Macbeth* the eminence of a tragic hero in the most vulnerable stages of his status. As *Macbeth* is appreciable and exculpable to some extent because of his conscious identification of it and his moral and intellectual endeavours to suppress and annihilate it when he is guilty of nourishing criminal thoughts, so when he is afraid of losing kingship and is in the threshold of being spiritually damned, he is admirable because he can summon courage to defy fate in a manner which, despite smacking of evil, reasserts his vanishing valour:

> Rather than so, come, fate, into the list,
> And champion me to th' utterance. (III.i.70-71)

He avows before the blood-splattered ghost of Banquo that no appearance but that one can intimidate him and that Banquo alive will fail to 'dare me to the desert with thy sword'. When he is repudiated by his Thanes, *Macbeth* protests

> The mind I sway by, and the heart I bear,
> Shall never sag with doubt, nor shake with fear. (V.iii.9-10)

Upon the 'approaching' of the Birnam Wood to Dunsinane, he gives commands which are worthy of a general, 'Arm, arm and out!' and announces, 'At least we'll die with harness on our back.' He categorically rejects the very notion of committing cowardly suicide even when Macduff reveals his birth secret, the second prophecy of the witches concerning his death, 'Why should I play the Roman fool and die on mine own sword?' Like a true hero he declares before death, 'Yet I will try the last.' His religiousness is embodied, though faintly but passionately and so more credibly, in his own words when he decides to kill Duncan and Banquo. Referring to lady *Macbeth*'s ringing the death-bell of Duncan, he says,

> Hear it not, Duncan; for it is a knell
> That summons thee to Heaven, or to Hell. (II.i.63-64)

Before Banquo's murder, he says about Banquo's soul, 'If it find heaven, must find it out to-night'. *Macbeth* evinces his kindness, though too late and to no effect, when he decides to spare Macduff though the witches have forewarned him of Macduff, the first prophecy regarding his death, and even when Birnam Wood has already 'reached' Dunsinane,

> Of all men else I have avoided thee:
> But get thee back, my soul is too much charg'd
> With blood of thine already. (V.vii.32-34)

The feeling of guilt invigorates in him the sense of kindness because it is his last chance to show kindness, his last chance to prove to himself, to his conscious mind that he has not sunk to the nadir of irredeemable criminality. *Macbeth* was patriotic in his defense of his country from Norwegian invasion, and he is no less patriotic later when Scotland is again in some fear of another foreign invasion, this time the English, as is evident in his appeal to the doctor to return the country to its 'sound and pristine health.'

Imagination: the Link in the Psyche and the Veneer

The poetic imagination of *Macbeth* is the only link among his unconscious, his preconscious and his conscious parts of mind, and invigorated with his innately good unconscious it expresses this interrelationship exquisitely. But as it visualises the truths of life more than it sees the realities, it fails to bridge meaningfully the gaps among them. However, Shakespeare considerably conceals *Macbeth*'s criminality under the veneer of his poetic paraphernalia which he lets spring from *Macbeth*'s passionate thinking and which are colored by his penetrating imagination. Thus in a theatre image the prophecies become 'happy prologues to the swelling act Of the imperial theme'. With darkness imagery before the murders of Duncan and Banquo, *Macbeth* says, 'Stars, hide your fires' and 'Come seeling Night, scarf up the tender eye of pitiful Day'. The crime spot, the earth, becomes 'this bank and shoal of time' and crime becomes the 'ingredience of our poision'd chalice'. However, all kinds of imagery, mostly evil, that *Macbeth* uses in the process of his criminal degradation are far out-weighed by his images in the course of his realization, by his 'yellow leaf' image, by the imagery of his agonizing 'Tomorrow and to-morrow' speech. Thus every trait that *Macbeth* manifests or is said to have possessed before he perpetrated his crimes returns with a renewed potentiality to vindicate that he is not an utterly lost man, that he is not a downright villain, that he is not a contemptible and irredeemable criminal. R S Crane states that 'what most sharply distinguishes our view of *Macbeth* from that of the victims and enemies is that, whereas they see him from the outside only, we see him also, throughout the main action of the play- the major action of the play- from the inside, as he sees himself, and 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 the *Poetics*' (Crane, 1976).

Multidimensionalities of *Macbeth*'s Hamartia

The proportions of the influences of his own free-will, of fate and of Lady *Macbeth* are very significant to assess, for the nature of the hamartia of the tragic hero is deliberately made multifaceted and complex by the playwright so that *Macbeth* may emerge undisputedly as a tragic hero and not as a plain and depraved criminal. In those moments when he is most conscious and calculating, spiritually and legally, *Macbeth* regards his ambition as the only motivating force in his mind behind his decision to murder Duncan:

> I have no spur
> To prick the sides of my intent, but only
> Vaulting ambition, which overleaps itself
> And falls on th' other. (I.vii. 25-28)

But before he says that he is fighting against the supernatural, which has awakened his preconscious ambition and which is representing his conscious state now, success is being achieved and lost by turns. The first two prophecies are 'happy prologues' but the 'supernatural soliciting cannot be ill, cannot be good.' Fear of murder, 'horrible imaginings' must be dispelled. *Macbeth*'s preconscious state of mind is, however, very strong and produces in him auditory hallucination, '*Macbeth* does murder sleep', and also visual hallucination which involves a dagger. But in the dagger-hallucination scene *Macbeth*, after a considerable bafflement, becomes conscious of his preconscious mind,

'It is the bloody business which informs Thus to mine eyes'. This hallucination reveals how cogent a motivating force his preconscious ambition is in the tragic act. Sir Quiller-Couch argues that it is by making *Macbeth* 'proceed to his crime under some fatal hallucination' that Shakespeare makes a criminal a tragic hero (Quiller-Couch, 1963). Ambition, to 'gain our peace', is the only spur in *Macbeth*'s preconscious, but in his conscious state he is impelled, besides this ambition, by two other conscious impulses. *Macbeth* never denies the importance of the prophecies as a stimulus to his ambitious acts, his criminal deeds, as is evident not only in the importance he attaches to the supernatural creatures but also in the intensity with which he holds them responsible for his destruction. He writes to Lady *Macbeth*, 'I have learn'd by the perfect'st report, that they have more in them than mortal knowledge.' Immediately before murdering Duncan, he shows how inextricably he has been connected with the witches:

> Witchcraft celebrates
> Pale Hecate's offerings; and wither'd Murder,
> .....
> Moves like a ghost. (II.i. 51-56)

Though *Macbeth* has already committed his tragic act, the murder of Duncan, part of the witches' prophecy impels him to murder Banquo. And their first direct 'bloody' counsel instigates him to massacre Macduff's family. *Macbeth* rightly blames the witches for their complicity:

> Infected be the air whereon they ride;
> And damn'd all those that trust them! (IV.i.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. (V.vii.48-49)

But in these incriminations *Macbeth*'s emphasis is on actively believing their ambiguous prophecies, not on their active abetment, which is, but the role of Lady *Macbeth*.

Lady *Macbeth*'s share in the crime, active only in the first murder, consists in transforming *Macbeth*'s ambition into decision, his decision into determination and determination into action. She successfully suggests to him the camouflage of hypocrisy, to 'look like the innocent flower, But be the serpent under't', and *Macbeth*, before going to murder Duncan, exploits it in the case of Banquo who otherwise might have prevented him, 'False face must hide what the false heart doth know'. She does not let *Macbeth* retreat even when he decides to, 'We will proceed no further in this business', and illustrates to him with a devastating infanticidal image the urgency of fulfilling an oath. Her greatest share in *Macbeth*'s tragic act is in poking his courage, his manliness, whenever it burns low. She cannot let his ambition yield to fear, 'Letting "I dare not" wait upon "I would"', and when he fears failure, she counsels him to 'screw your courage to the sticking place'. And *Macbeth*'s courage thus fortified never droops before he executes the plan to murder Duncan which is contrived by his wife.

> I am settled and bend up
> Each corporal agent to this terrible feat. (I.vii.78-79)

Like *Macbeth*, Lady *Macbeth* is not actively abetted by the witches in the murder of Duncan, which otherwise might have magnified more the role of the witches than the role she played. *Macbeth*'s hamartia thus mainly consists in his ambition which is brought to the conscious state of his mind, and thus intensified, by the witches and which is helped to be metamorphosed into criminal action by Lady *Macbeth*. A criminal whose criminal motivation consists in being inextricably enmeshed in a triangular trap that involves the whole universe because it integrates the divided mind of an individual, the supernatural agent and the human agent, appeals more profoundly to the imagination than the crimes he commits. *Macbeth*'s crimes are universally common, but his hamartia is unique.

Shakespeare's Dramatic Contrivances for the Rescue

Shakespeare seems purposely to have credited his tragic hero with so richly complex a hamartia, the three facets of which, in modern legal system, are termed the 'mitigating circumstances.' *Macbeth* as a tragic hero commits his primary tragic act by murdering Duncan, a sleeping kinsman, a grateful guest, a competent king. And when he murders Banquo and Macduff's 'wife, children, servants, all That could be found', *Macbeth* is more a criminal than a hero, but certainly the greater tragic hero. Duncan's murder necessitates for him the other murders which also have in them tragic implications and which hastens his retribution. All these murders are linked to *Macbeth*'s tragic flaw, his ambition to be the king. To falsify a part of the witches' prophecy, to protect the crown from Banquo's progeny, because 'To be thus is nothing, but to be safely thus', *Macbeth* murders Banquo and attempts to murder Fleance, both of which are criminal acts. Though he is warned only of Macduff by the witches, he unjustly visits Macduff's crime, defection to the enemy force, upon the innocent and unguarded members of his family and castle. The first two crimes, because they are not perpetrated for crime's sake, mitigate the severity of the crimes in the audience's judgement. All these three tragic acts, which are two types of crimes in nature, treason and murder, have the essential interrelationship of cause and effect, and thus they depict the inevitable downfall of the tragic hero illustrating the consequences of a tragic error. Shakespeare, exploiting a playwright's freedom, lessens the seriousness of *Macbeth*'s culpability. Duncan's murder has taken place off stage. Banquo is not allowed to impeach *Macbeth* vehemently before his death and *Macbeth* is absent when Banquo and the members of Macduff's family are murdered.

The Peripeteia

Even by delineating a peculiar and complex peripeteia of the fortune of his tragic hero, Shakespeare lessens the criminality of *Macbeth*. Designing to be a happy and peaceful king, *Macbeth* murders his sleep, his peace, his happiness. He rises to material prosperity but plunges into psychological depression. Peripeteia always involves a paradox, and in *Macbeth*'s case it involves something more; it brings about various profound psychological transformations in him. Besides degenerating into a perpetrator of countless murders, of which the audience is given no further examples, *Macbeth* wants to destroy the universal harmony. But this is the wish of a man whose conscious and preconscious states are experiencing a prototypical disintegration:

> But let the frame of things disjoint, both the worlds sufer,
> Ere we will eat our meal in fear and sleep
> In the afliction of these terrible dreams,
> That shake us nightly. (III.ii.16-19)

Macbeth stoops to soliciting prophecy from the witches who, he says, 'untie the winds, and let them fight Against the Churches'. But he has not sold his soul to the devil. Hecate tells the witches that *Macbeth* 'Loves for his own ends, not for you.' However, the most lamentable change that has come over him is fearfulness. Before Duncan's murder *Macbeth*'s herioc courage was giving way to fear, but this fear was the fear of crime, the fear of sin and the fear of retribution, and just after the murder it remained so, 'I am afraid to think what I have done'. But afterwards it lapses into fear of death, of being exposed as a criminal, 'Banquo's ghost being gone, I am a man again'. Macduff's revelation of his birth secret frightens *Macbeth*; he says that 'it hath cow'd my better part of man'. Such degrading reversal of the noble qualities *Macbeth* earlier demonstrated evokes pity for a tragic hero who is now experiencing the reversal of his psychological state. *Macbeth* himself describes his reversal most poignantly,

> My way of life
> Is fall'n into sere, the yellow leaf;
> And that which should accompany old age,
> As honour, love, obedience, troops of friends,
> I must not look to have; but in their stead,
> Curses, not loud, but deep, mouth-honour, breath,
> Which the poor heart would fain deny, and dare not. (V.iii.22-28)

This evinces his knowledge of his reversal which he has earlier shown but faintly and which now suggests his realization of his tragic act, his criminal deeds. And this knowledge imparts glory to the tragic hero and elevates him from the lowest status, the status of a criminal to the lofty firmament, the firmament of a tragic hero wherefrom a fall is inevitable.

The Unique Anagnorisis of *Macbeth*

In *Macbeth*, as in *King Lear*, the peripeteia of the tragic hero does not, strictly speaking, follow his anagnorisis, which, however, happens in *Othello*, in Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus*, and which, according to Aristotle, is the 'most effective form' of anagnorisis. But in *Macbeth* the anagnorisis of the tragic hero is ubiquitous, and it should have been multidimensional too in the sense that *Macbeth*'s tragic error is multidimensional. This ubiquitousness of anagnorisis is most effective in presenting *Macbeth* as a criminal with a conscience, so a true tragic hero. And at the same time the absence of the multidimensionlity of his anagnorisis of the peculiarly complex hamartia of his detracts from the sublimity of his status as a tragic hero. The constant conflict between these two contrary aspects of his anagnorisis creates an intense but magnificent tension in the audience. This tension contributes not only to the tragic sense in the play but also to enhancing *Macbeth*'s distinction as a tragic hero by manifesting him as a human being who is not omnicient like the superhuman creatures, who has not enough restraint and whose knowledge, though enough to sense his criminalities, is neither enough to control them nor enough to make him realize consciously the multifacedness of his tragic flaw.

Macbeth's realization of only one facet of his three-fold hamartia, the role of the witches, is consciously ubiquitous. Before committing the primary tragic act, the murder of Duncan, he knew that 'This supernatural soliciting cannot be ill; cannot be good.' After the secondary tragic act, the murder of Banquo and after encountering the witches for the second time, he cautions in effect all but himself, 'And damn'd [be] all those that trust them!' After the tertiary tragic act, the murder of Macduff's family and when Birnam Wood 'approaches' Dunsiname, *Macbeth* for the first time begins to actively and practically realize the evil ambiguity of the witches; he says he begins

> To doubt th' equivocation of the fiend,
> That lies like truth. (V.v. 43-44)

And the ultimate and transparent realization concerning the witches' birth-prophecy becomes revealed. *Macbeth* observes,

> And be these juggling fiends no more believ'd,
> That palter with us in a double sense;
> That keep the word of promises to our ear,
> And break it to our hope. (V.vii.48-51)

It is not wholly surprising that *Macbeth* does not consciously realize the contribution of the two most influential elements in his tragic act, possession of ambition and activation of it by his wife, the flaw within and one of the two stimuli outside, and instead lays the whole blame on the witches. Hecate's moon-vapour magic, which will draw *Macbeth* to 'his confusion' so that he 'shall spurn fate, scorn death and bear His hopes' bove wisdom, grace and fear', effectively stifles his full-scale conscious realization of his three-fold error. This partial realization, however, illuminates *Macbeth*'s humanness, his limitations as are common to all men including, of course, the tragic heroes. And the audience's realization of this can only generate pity for such a criminal, for such a hero who has such a tragic downfall. On the contrary, what is the most admirable self-rectification of *Macbeth* is that though he overcomes fear to face opposition, though death has been looming large on the dark horizon for a considerable time, he ceases to be anxious for the crown, 'the imperial theme' does not allure him any more.

Although *Macbeth*'s realization of his tragic error is not consciously multidimensional, his realization of his tragic situation and the tragic consequences of his tragic act is consciously multi-dimensional because it involves his ideas of justice, religion and peace and his knowledge of the self, of life and death. This realization is ubiquitous too. And these multidimensionality and ubiquitousness almost consistently demand pity for the criminal and corroborate the facts that *Macbeth* was a hero before he became a criminal, that he retains his heroic status to some extent and that he regains his heroic status by facing death bravely at last. These multidimensionality and ubiquitousness also contribute to mitigating the severity of *Macbeth*'s crimes in the minds of the audience who always regard him not as a common criminal but as a conscientious man who has made a tragic error which transforms him into a criminal and thus into a tragic hero. Before murdering Duncan, *Macbeth* knew that assassination cannot 'trammel up the consequence' and that justice is 'even-handed'; after meeting Banquo's ghost he becomes almost certain that 'blood will have blood'. After murdering Duncan he realizes that he 'had most need of blessing'; before deciding to murder Banquo he becomes sure that he

has lost his 'eternal jewel' to the 'common enemy of man', the devil. After deciding to murder Banquo he ineffectively realizes the nullity of being a king in a criminal way:

> Better be with the dead,
> Whom we, to gain our peace, have sent to peace,
> Than on the torture of our mind to lie
> In restless ecstasy. (III.ii.19-22)

Macbeth identifies his imbroglio when, after encountering Banquo's ghost, he learns of Macduff's refusal to join his coronation banquet:

> I am in blood
> Stepp'd in so far, that, should I wade no more,
> Returning were as tedious as go o'er. (III.iv.136-138)

Here repentance seems a far cry, and repentance never comes before self-knowledge is achieved, and *Macbeth* is gradually losing self-knowledge. After murdering Duncan he can assess the gravity of the 'sorry sight' and observes, 'To know my deed, 'twere best not know myself'. And when the doctor replies to *Macbeth*'s inquiry about Lady *Macbeth*'s mental malady, 'Therein the patient Must minister to himself', he misses the whole of the hidden import of the reply. *Macbeth*, however, regains self-knowledge when he can define his position in the human society: he has forfeited the good things of life, 'honour, love, obedience, troops of friends' and incurred instead the evil things, curses, lip-service and flattery. '*Macbeth* at the last, by self-knowledge, attains grace', says G Wilson Knight (Knight, 1965). Closely related to his self-knowledge, *Macbeth*'s knowledge of life and death, the two greatest mysteries on earth, is most remarkable. Deceived by the witches he believes he shall live 'the lease of nature.' But before any of the second volley of prophecies suggests any hint of fulfillment, his craving for life has begun to flicker, 'I have liv'd long enough'. This realization most transparently and most vigorously descends on him when Lady *Macbeth*, unrepentant but vanquished by the sense of guilt, commits suicide.

> 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. (V.v.23-28)

It is hardly possible to suppress pity for a man who because of a wrong step suffers severely from external opposition and from internal conflict between id and ego, between conscience and action, and who gives such passionate and poetic expression to the transitoriness and meaninglessness of hectic life, to the pointlessness of pompous actions in a dignified position. *Macbeth*'s realization and suffering, which are expressed here only consciously as is obvious in their poignancy and faintness, are evident in his comment:

> And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
> The way to dusty death. (V.v.22-23)

Here *Macbeth* suggests the past foolish activities of his and his wife which have brought about the retributory death and its universal humiliation. The whole of 'to-morrow and to-morrow' speech, sprung from Lady *Macbeth*'s death, applies evenly to either of them, and the concepts of foolishness, hypocrisy ('a poor player'), ambition ('strutting'), crimes ('fury'), counselling ('sound') and suffering ('fretting') point to *Macbeth*'s conscious expression of his unconscious realization of the annals of their lives including Lady *Macbeth*'s abetment in his tragic act of crime. *Macbeth*'s tragedy is the tragedy of the conflict between the conscious and unconscious, between which the tragic hero is torn. The dagger-hallucination and the 'murdering sleep' hallucination point not only to the vigorous preconscious ambition of *Macbeth* which is his tragic flaw but also to his unconscious suffering. His id incorporates his ambition and his innate goodness while his super- ego embodies his intellectual faculty that wants to stifle his urge for such actions as are crimes. As his id is occasionally overpowered by his ego, as is evident in his identifying the dagger-hallucination and his overcoming Banquo's ghost's'unreal mockery',his ego fails to recognize explicitly his preconscious flaw before his death. But the battle that is constantly raging in his mind between his id and his ego is the cause of his conscious and unconscious sufferings.

Death as the Cathartic Agent

Death, the culmination of intense sufferings, is the fate that awaits the tragic hero. *Macbeth* has consciously committed his crimes, and he has suffered terribly all along both consciously and unconsciously. Murdered Duncan is a 'sorry sight', and *Macbeth*'s hands 'will rather the multitudinous seas incarnardine'. His preconscious sense of justice generates in the mind the ghost of murdered Banquo 'the horrible shadow', which demonstrates the 'unreal mock'ry' to prick *Macbeth*'s consciousness. This unconscious suffering lurks even behind his hypocrisy when Duncan's murder is unveiled, 'Had I but died an hour before this chance, I had lived a blessed time'. After the murder of Macduff's family, *Macbeth*'s unconscious suffering is expressed in Lady *Macbeth*'s somnambulistic words. 'The thane of Fife had a wife: where is she now? you mar all, with this starting'. 'All three murders, then', Wayne Booth states, 'are followed immediately by scenes of sufferings and self-torture', and these are 'contradictory circumstances' contrived by Shakespeare with which he proves that '*Macbeth* is still somehow sympathetic' (Booth, 1936). He has forfeited 'the season of all natures, sleep' and 'Put rancours in the vessel of peace'. He has 'supp'd full with horrors'. *Macbeth*'s last two comments, 'Hang those that talk of fear' and 'while I see lives, the gashes Do better upon them', can be excused on the solid grounds that this is a battle time and that his valour is regenerating in him even when death appears imminent. Moreover, after these two comments he desires to spare Macduff out of pity; he now seems to be 'full o'th' milk of human kindness'. Thus after terrible mental sufferings and nascent regeneration, his death brings to a climactic point the emotions of pity and fear of the audience who feel that through the wounds *Macbeth* inflicted on Duncan's body which look 'like a breach in nature For ruin's wasteful entrance' *Macbeth*'s retributory destruction has entered and wasted his heroic potentialities. A sense of tragic waste hovers over their overcast minds even-though 'the Powers above' have 'put on their instruments' and through punitive forces have meted out punishment to him for his crimes. 'There is no tragedy in its expulsion of evil: the tragedy is that this involves the

waste of good' says A.C. Bradley (Bradley, 1992).The audience's sense of justice is satisfied because a criminal is punished, but greater than this sense of justice is their emotion of pity since *Macbeth* in adition to murdering others has almost murdered his flawless conscience and consequently suffers immensely till a catastrophic death administers an ultimate balm on his 'compunctious visitings of Nature'. He is not exclusively what Aristotle calls 'the undeserving sufferer' because he, unlike Oedipus, commits crime mainly for an individual folly (Dorsch, 1965). He is a Shakespearean tragic hero, a modern, Renaissance man endowed with a free will. And for this reason too the pity is greater as the fear too is greater because, in Aristotelian terms again, *Macbeth* is a man like ourselves. W.H. Auden states that 'Watching *Macbeth*, every member of the audience knows that the possibility of becoming a *Macbeth* exists in his nature' (Auden, 1936).

Conclusion

In *Macbeth* Shakespeare illustrates the passionate journey of a soul in search of its fulfilling conditions. *Macbeth*'s aim is admirable but his way is perilous. Through murder of human beings he comes to learn the ultimate truths about life and death – life is in unpretentious and righteous living while death is in unnatural and ambitious killing. His tragedy thus consists in his preconscious endeavours to know the unconscious layer of his mind so that he may reconcile the two with the conscious, so that he may integrate his conscience and his actions even when a terrible and constant battle between these pairs of harmonizable and synchronizable contrarieties is raging and even when he is dueling with each of the two evil extrinsic elements on the same psychological battlefield. This has been made evident in each and every aspect of *Macbeth*'s status as a tragic hero, and the ultimate mortal success of this psychological odyssey expiates all his criminalities and fortifies his position as a tragic hero.

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