Macbeth As Tragic Hero Essay, Research Paper

Macbeth as a Tragic Hero

Tragedy elucidated is dramatic composition of serious or sombre character, with an unhappy ending, any literary composition dealing with a dismal theme carried to a tragic conclusion relating to a lamentable, dreadful fatal event or affair, conceivably known as a disaster or calamity. Hero in literary stipulations is a man of distinguished courage or performance, admired for his noble personality, one who is invested with laudable qualities in the opinion of others. These two words are the fundamental core when accessing the character of Macbeth. The requisites of a tragic hero are fulfilled by Macbeth, he is a person born of noble birth, who undergoes a fall. Macbeth evokes our pity and consternation, he is neither thoroughly good nor thoroughly evil but a mixture of both. Considered a once moral character he suffers a change in fortune from happiness to misery, due to a mistaken deed, which he performs due to his hamartia -’error of judgement’. Pity is induced to this character, because he is not evil and his ill fortune is greater than he deserves. Invocation of our fear is eminent because we realize we are fallible and could make the same error. tragic hero?? Yes, because he ultimately cannot escape his character flaw, namely that he is too ambitious, he cannot separate this ambition from issues of justice or morality, and his story thus inevitably ends tragically.

Macbeth s degeneration is protracted, throughout the play, it progresses and eventually comes to its summit. The three most prominent aspects, which bequeath to the relapse of Macbeth are: The foretelling of the prophecy of the witches concerning his destiny, the clouding of his judgement, by Lady Macbeth, through means of influx and manipulation and finally the critical shortcoming in his character, the trait of over-ambition which drove his desire to be king. These three key facets are the focal points, which account for hamartia in the characters persona.

Macbeth s defect would attest to be terminal, this flaw in his character would ascertain to impair him considerably, as the witches prey upon it. The revelation of his potential Kingship serves to fuel Macbeth s aspiration for ambition as he endeavours to attain this goal as soon as possible. Macbeth s preliminary thought is to slay Duncan. However, as he thinks this out plausibly, he realizes that “If chance will have me king, why, chance may crown me” (Act I, Sc. III, Line 157). Macbeth perceives to have control over his own ambition. This is, pending until Duncan’s Son Malcolm is crowned Prince of Cumberland. At this juncture, restraint over his ambition has been perplexed and the verdict that the bereavement of Duncan must occur is concluded, he says: The Prince of Cumberland! That is a step on which I must fall down or else o’erleap, For in my way it lies. Stars, hide your fires; Let not light see my black and deep desires. The eye wink at the hand, yet let that be which the eye fears, when it is done to see. (Act I, Sc. IV, Line 55) Macbeth then departs to his household in preparation for the arrival of Duncan and his party. As the hour draws nearer, we see Macbeth endure one final attack of conscience as his morals apprehend him. For a concise period of time Macbeth seems to be persuaded against the sadistic act of assassination. Here at this point of the play the imagery of manhood is conceivably at its pinnacle, we are shown the bloodthirsty behaviour, which is associated with manhood in Macbeth s society. To help convince Macbeth not to call the murder off, Lady Macbeth questions his manhood. She articulates, When you durst do it, then you were a man; And to be more than what you were, you would Be so much more the man (Act 1, Sc. VII, Line 49). Macbeth s conscience is still manifest, which makes him experience feelings of guilt and regret. Hence the dagger soliloquy: Is this a dagger which I see before me, The handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch let me clutch thee. I have thee not, and yet I see thee still. Art thou not, fatal vision, sensible To feeling as to sight? Or art thou but A dagger of the mind, a false creation Proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain? (Act II, Sc. I, Line 44). Here we see the tragedy take place there is a mass symbolises of the eternal, raging campaign between light versus darkness. Imagery of this calibre is consistent throughout the plays entirety. Macbeth solicits for darkness to hide his desires in Act I, and then darkness shrouds the night of the murder. King Duncan hypothetically seen as the metaphorical figure which represents light in the first two acts is slain as the struggle for ascendancy goes in favour of darkness. Mine eyes are made fools o the other sense, or else worth all the rest; I see thee still, And on thy blade and dudgeon gouts of blood, Which was not so before. There s no such thing: It is the bloodybusiness which informs Thus to mine eyes. (Act II, Sc. I, Line 53). This portion of the soliloquy designates that Macbeth is sentient of the exploit, which he is about to administer, but in view of the fact that the good in him has lost the skirmish to evil, he carries out his intention which thus eventually leads to his downfall. Macbeth is predisposed he allows his insolence stemming from excessive pride to be the moderator of his conscience and this brings about the mannerism of hubris in his individual.

When the play first initialises Macberth s character is distinguished as admirable from the perspective of the culture, which he associates. Subsequently as the play persists we come to comprehend that these amiable characteristics that Macbeth once possessed have become disorientated. In effect what we are actually accustoming ourselves to, is the dehumanisation of Macbeth. This concept of dehumanisation is exploited progressively with the aid of the hamartia from Macbeth s individual. The relationship between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth illustrate this concept. Early in the play in a letter to his wife he addresses her “my dearest partner of greatness” (Act I, Sc. V, Line 8), later, when he is

talking to her in person, he calls her “My dearest love” (Act I, Sc. V, Line 54).

This sense of closeness and intimacy is shown in their correlation, that is until they had set themselves upon the path of murder. At this point, they have begun to disaffiliate from one another. In act five scene five, Macbeth hears a cry, not even noticing that it is a woman’s cry, let alone that of his own wife, he enquires “What is that noise?” (Line 7). Macbeth at this point has lost all sense of emotion and feeling, he has been stripped of his bond with humanity, to such extent that when he learns of his wife s death he treats it as a mere inconvenience to him rather than a loss. Macbeth remarks She should have died hereafter (Act V, Sc V, Line 17). Macbeth s reaction to the news is literally motionless, his loss of feeling towards life is most likely caused by the situation which surrounds him. He conveys his feelings:

Tomorrow, tomorrow and tomorrow creeps in this petty pace from day to day to the last syllable of recorded time. And all our yesterdays have but lighted fools the way to dusty death. Out, out brief candle! Life is 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.

Here we see MacBeth as a hopeless and destroyed man who has come far down the twisted path of deceit and murder, to him life now means nothing. The castle is being attacked and the witch s prophecy foretold, he considers suicide, which the Romans considered the dignified thing to do under such circumstances. But he decides it would be more satisfying to take as many people with him as possible. When we see what has become of Macbeth we are affected and feel a great sense of pity towards him, we as the audience sympathize for a man who is not eminently good and just, yet whose mishap is brought about not by decadence or corruption, but threw this lethal fault, which is embedded within his persona.

Macbeth is initially inaugurated as a heroic man of virtuous doings, but his whole approach completely changes because of the murders he commits. His major character flaws show traces of fear and insecurity, combined with his disproportionate over ambition. All of this is then motivated by his ludicrous wife, who foolishly administers not only to Macbeth s demise, but also her own. Superstition and prophecy are the elements, which bestow the misfortune, these convincing contentions make Macbeth a classic example of a tragic hero. Ironically despite all this, the name Macbeth means son of life it is not a patronymic hence the b is lower case.