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### The Portrayal of Ambition

Shakespeare wrote the play *Macbeth* in 1606 or 1607 about the desperate actions and consequences taken by the main character, Macbeth. Shakespeare explores the terrible and destructive measures one may go to in order to achieve a specific goal. Macbeth and his wife become blinded by the picture of power when they begin their reign of terror on the unfortunate country of Scotland. Battling their consequences when reality returns and bad karma sets upon them. The corrupting power of ambition is explored throughout the Shakespearean play *Macbeth* through the demise of Macbeth, the suicide of Lady Macbeth, and its inherently destructive aspects.

Macbeth was an honored soldier, even by his king, before his yearning for power and his ambitions corrupted him, leading to his ultimate demise. Macbeth was approached by three witches who gave him false prophecies stating that he'd become Thane of Glamis, Thane of Cawdor, and King. The Three Witches proclaim:

First Witch: All hail, Macbeth. Hail to thee, Thane of Glamis.

Second Witch: All hail, Macbeth. Hail to thee, Thane of Cawdor.

Third Witch: All hail, Macbeth, that shalt be king hereafter. (Shakespeare 1:3:48-50).

The Witches made Macbeth feel as if it was his right to carry out these prophecies and the idea of power started to take over. Macbeth then killed King Duncan in order to wrongfully take his place, as well as killing Banquo and Macduff's family for being suspicious. Macbeth states

“Away, and mock the time with fairest show;/ False face must hide what the false heart doth know.” (Shakespeare 1:7:82-83) He was now out of control and completely desperate to rule over everyone, stopping at nothing for power. Due to Macbeth’s selfishness and unrighteousness before and during his reign as king, both he and many others ended up dead. Macbeth says “Now, o’er the one half world/Nature seems dead, and wicked dreams abuse/The curtained sleep;” (Shakespeare 2:2:50-52) However Macbeth did not act alone, his wife, Lady Macbeth, influenced the start of Macbeth’s reign of terror.

Lady Macbeth had many demons with her and due to her actions in aiding and supporting her husband she eventually committed suicide. Lady Macbeth longed for the power of her husband being king so she manipulates Macbeth into killing King Duncan and turns Macbeth into a monster. Lady Macbeth says “From this time, / Such I account thy love. Art thou afeard / To be the same in thine own act and valor / As thou art in desire?” (Shakespeare 1:7:38-41). Lady Macbeth ultimately began the horrors caused by Macbeth and his way of being king with an iron fist. She not only convinced Macbeth to kill King Duncan, but covered it up for him and belittled him for feeling guilty and scared. As she stated “I laid their daggers ready;” (Shakespeare 2:2:12) Lady Macbeth was a cruel and heartless woman who just wanted to be of a higher status. Once she had discovered the true monster she created within Macbeth she jumped out a window, falling to her end. Seyton informs Macbeth “The Queen, my lord, is dead.” (Shakespeare 5:5:16). Her guilt had taken over once she realized the horrors her husband had begun to carry out, initiated through her manipulation and insults.

Ambition is a recurring motif throughout this play causing harmful, destructive, and power-hungry influences. Due to Macbeth’s ambition of becoming Thane of Cawdor and King of Scotland, he makes unjustifiable choices consequently resulting in his and Lady Macbeth’s

downfall. As Macbeth realizes “They have tied me to a stake; I cannot fly, / But, bear-like, I must fight the course.” (Shakespeare 5:7:1-2). Had Macbeth perceived the Witch’s prophecies as something he may be fortunate enough to be given instead of something he had to force his way into receiving the outcome may have changed. In an attempt to stop Macbeth from reigning as king any longer England marched on to Scotland with over ten-thousand soldiers. Menteith states “The English power is near, lee=d on by Malcolm, / His uncle Siward, and the good Macduff.” (Menteith 5:2:1-2). Had Macbeth not let his ambitions for power take control of him, he may have been a great king. Macbeth was so corrupted by his own ambitions he murdered the entire family of one man who traded him. Rosse informs Macduff “Your castle is surprised; your wife and babes / Savagely slaughtered.” (Shakespeare 4:3:204-205). He had become ruthless and did not care for his people as a king should.

Macbeth and Lady Macbeth were not concerned for anyone but themselves. They were ruthless and sparked by the ambition of power. This ambition had its very own power, the power of corruption, which Lady Macbeth and her husband were faced with. Macbeth’s fate of demise and Lady Macbeth’s own suicide are two inherently destructive aspects of this corrupting power of ambition. Shakespeare did not end with their unjust ambitions, he gave the same to Macduff. However, Macduff used this to stop Macbeth and save Scotland. Therefore, ambition doesn’t have to be a bad thing Macbeth and Lady Macbeth just used theirs the wrong way.