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English III

31 January 2025

### Destructive Ambition and Its Consequences

In eleventh century Scotland, where the need for glory is a deep desire, William Shakespeare demonstrates several examples of destructive ambition within his play *Macbeth*. Originally, Macbeth is portrayed as a timid, kind ruler with no desire to cause any harm. On the other hand, his wife, Lady Macbeth, is exemplified as a woman who wishes for nothing other than to rule. Her greed and need for power quickly corrupts Macbeth causing him to do something that instantly changes his own personal morals. Macbeth's sudden change in personality consequently leads to his wife's, as well as his own, death. Macbeth along with Lady Macbeth are both depicted with destructive ambition in the play *Macbeth*, which eventually leads to the downfall of their lives because of their problematic decisions.

Shakespeare demonstrates destructive ambition first through Lady Macbeth whose hasty decisions soon corrupt Macbeth. Macbeth's destructive ambition is first introduced once he allows Lady Macbeth to persuade him into killing Duncan.

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. (80-83)

His words express that he initially does not want to kill Duncan but realizes it will result in his own benefit. Though he does not want to, he follows through with his actions and finishes the job of killing Duncan. He allows the reader of the play to know he has completed the action through his words, "I have done the deed. Didst thou not hear a noise?" (Shakespeare 15).

Having successfully followed through with the murder, Macbeth has regrets of killing him. As the play continues on Macbeth loses more and more sympathy resulting in more deaths. His wife's emotions are completely the opposite. Lady Macbeth begins the play as a greedy, hateful person whose feelings change to sympathetic as the play continues. Her initial emotions influence Macbeth and the person he turns out to be along with his decisions that lead to both of their downfalls.

Lady Macbeth's projection of herself onto Macbeth ends in the destruction of his and herself due to his dangerous choices. Macbeth's initial reaction to the idea of murdering Duncan is he is willing to do it but is quite afraid.

"The Prince of Cumberland – that is a step  
On which I must fall down, or else overleap,  
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." (49-54).

This statement describes that he is willing to kill Duncan even though he fears he will be found out. Lady Macbeth's reaction is quite the opposite though considering it is her plan to end Duncan.

“We fail?

But screw your courage to the sticking place,  
 And we’ll not fail. When Duncan is asleep –  
 Whereto the rather shall his day’s hard journey  
 Soundly invite him – his two chamberlains  
 Will I, with wine and wassail, so convince,  
 That memory, the warder of the brain,  
 Shall be a fume, and the receipt of reason  
 A limbeck only. When in swinish sleep  
 Their drenchèd natures lie as in death,  
 What cannot you and I perform upon  
 The unguarded Duncan? What not put upon  
 His spongy officers, who shall bear the guilt  
 Of our great quell?” (60-73)

She believes the plan will work out with no complications since they have someone to blame as well as an easy way to do it. In completing the murder and not being caught, Macbeth becomes a ruthless king who is willing to do anything to gain more power. In the end, his problematic decisions lead to his own and Lady Macbeth’s downfall.

Between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth there is a wide range of problematic decisions that inevitably lead to the deaths of several people. The first complicated decision is killing Duncan. Killing Duncan takes a huge toll on Macbeth’s mentality causing him to spiral into many other rash decisions. An example of this is demonstrated in his words, “O, yet I do repent me of my

fury/ That I did kill them.” (Shakespeare 103-104). Through his verbal statement he implies that he has now killed the two guards out of revenge for Duncan. Now that Duncan is taken care of, Macbeth realizes he must also bring an end upon Banquo to be first in line for the throne. His approach to killing Banquo however is much different. Instead of murdering him himself he believes it would be best to have murders kill him. The murderers are skeptical at first but quickly climb on board once Macbeth gives them good reason..

Ay, in the catalogue ye go for men,  
 As hounds and greyhounds, mongrels, spaniels, curs,  
 Shoughs, water-rugs and demi-wolves, are clept  
 All by the name of dogs. The valued file  
 Distinguishes the swift, the slow, the subtle,  
 The housekeeper, the hunter — every one  
 According to the gift which bounteous nature  
 Hath in him closed, whereby he does receive  
 Particular addition from the bill  
 That writes them all alike — and so of men.  
 Now, if you have a station in the file  
 Not i' the worst rank of manhood, say 't.  
 And I will put that business in your bosoms,  
 Whose execution takes your enemy off,  
 Grapples you to the heart and love of us,  
 Who wear our health but sickly in his life,

Which, in his death, were perfect. (91-107)

Through this quote Macbeth is persuading the murderers to kill Banquo for his benefit.

The tale of *Macbeth* is a gut wrenching play that highlights how quickly a desire for power can turn into a painful battle to stay alive. The play gives many examples of destructive ambition and how it leads to other bad decisions. Macbeth's tragic end is nothing other than the result of his own rash decisions.

Works Cited

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