



Journeys from Crimes to Crowns: Literary Representation of Shakespearian Tragedies

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Abstract

Thinking is ideas' banking and everyone wants the encashment of his/her thinking. Man desires to get godly powers through the encashment of his ideas. Some people get power through inheritance while others earn through hard work. The scholars are of the view that religion and fortune favor some men in committing crimes to reach the crowns, while others lose their lives. Human history is full of such incidents where sinners become saints through power. Religious and cultural accounts start preaching and teaching of their nobility. Shakespearian tragedies, in this regard, are highly important where different dramatic characters and historical figures reached to crowns through committing crimes and these characters can be seen in the present age. This research paper is an investigation that how has the act of crime in Shakespeare's Hamlet (2006), Macbeth (1990) and King Lear (1897) connected to the accession of crowns?

Key Words: Shakespearian Tragedies, Crimes, Crowns, Representations

Introduction

Power or thirst for power leads to crime (Woodiwiss, 2001). Since the creation of the universe, living things are revolving in the circle of power i.e. the big fish is eating the small ones, the monkey is ruling over the donkey and the sea is feeding the free (Anderson, Culler & Patterson, 1995). In a worldly structure, even nature is working on the concept of power and even enjoying power in one way or another (Willis, 2017). Little and bigger, high and low, the sky and the earth and light and dark are the binary oppositions that create the frame which promotes the power (Willis, 1967). It is also a fact that power is part and parcel to run and control the world (Anderson & Fouad, 2008). That is the reason that monolithic religions preach that God is center of the power (Edwards, 1996). Power's need is the basic instinct of human beings (Nietzsche, 1967).

Man wants to become a god, because he has an innate desire to reach absolute power. He wants to live and enjoy forever which is impossible and there is no invention so to achieve this end. Human beings maintain power through physical force, diplomacy and conspiracy (Králik & Torok 2016). Human history is full of such examples where different persons obtained and lost power over time. In this world, power does not remain constant but it shifts from one country to another and even from one individual to another (Davies, 2012). That is the reason, the world has been transformed from multi-polar to bi-polar and from bi-polar to a unipolar state. It is a fact that the centers of Power had always shifted and are shifting (Dandeker, 1994).

This shift and replacement are integral parts of human history. Death and birth and conspiracy and assassination also play a vital role in the shifting of power. Human beings killed their relatives just for the sake of power. Fathers killed sons; sons killed their fathers and brothers killed their brothers just for the sake of power and thrones. Power and crown seem stronger than the relations among human beings and immediate relations (Richards, 1995).

Power and powerful and crime and criminals have strong relations. History and literature depict that crime and crown have strong ties. Every individual who gains rule or power has a history of crime (Meron, 1998). It is also a fact that some people born with golden spoons, and they get power and crown through inheritance. But even those people also commit crimes just for the sake of maintaining their power. Some scholars and

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philosophers believe that power creates rivalry, and to crush that rivalry, the use of power is very necessary. History shows that running the throne is not an easy task. Foucault presents a strong relationship between power and knowledge, but it is also a truth that power also plays an important role in the construction of knowledge and realities (Hall, 2001).

Literature Review

Humanity has passed through different phases to reach postmodern age and in each phase where there is humanity, there is crime. Good and evil are human beings quality when the evil side of man prevails then it gives below to criminality and criminal thinking of human beings. On the other hand, good is a symbol of peacefulness and prosperity. It is a fact that these two sides of man's mind exist once at the same time. Archaeological evidences show that crime and criminality existed even in Mesopotamian civilization. When we study other civilizations, it is quite cleared that crime existed even in all the civilizations of the world.

In a literal sense, organized crime is understood as an illegal activity just for the sake of power and money. These systems are also developed along with the formulating laws, governments and international trade. Robbery, banditry, abduction, coercion, fabrication, misrepresentation, and exchanging stolen or illicit products and enterprises are for the most part old occupations that have frequently included the dynamic interest of landowners, vendors, and government authorities (Woodiwiss, 2001). Numerous individuals today, in any case, pursue the leaders of the US government and pundits and sorted out wrongdoing as being synonymous with super-criminal 'Mafia-type' associations. These are generally observed as independent elements, unmistakable from genuine society; however, they are having practically boundless territorial, national, and even worldwide power. As a foundation to this comprehension of sorted out wrongdoing, there exists an agreement among most pundits that proposes that the United States has had the most experience in the achievement in managing the issue. In 'Organized Crime and American Power: A History', Michael Woodiwiss contends that composed criminal movement has never been a genuine risk to build up monetary and political power structures in the United States, yet more regularly a liquid, variable, and open-finished wonder that has, truth be told, supplemented those structures.

History shows that even the first civilization of the world is not secure from the crimes. 'Murder in Mesopotamia' is a work of criminologist fiction by British author Agatha Christie, first distributed in the UK by the Collins Crime Club on 6 July 1936 and in the US by Dodd, Mead and Company later in the equivalent year. The UK version retailed at seven shillings and sixpence (7/6) and the US released at \$2.00. The spread was planned by Robin McCartney. The book highlights Belgian criminologist Hercule Poirot. The epic is set at an archeological unearthing in Iraq, and illustrative subtleties get from the creator's visit to the Royal Cemetery at Ur where she met her better half, Sir Max Mallowan, and other British archeologists. It was adjusted for TV in 2002.

Literature relies heavily on crime but not always in the same manner. The literary artists employ crime in two distinct ways in their works: The one represented by Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment* (2000) and the other type by Dreiser's *An American Tragedy* (2003). These literary works primarily focus on crime and its deadly consequences as crucial themes in their fiction. The history of crime in literature goes back far to ancient times (Hibbert, 1963). Literature is considered mirror of life. It deals with all the dimensions of human beings lives in one way or another. Crime started soon after humanity started its journey. Even, some scholars are of the view that crime started when Adam and Eve used to live in Paradise.

The Bible narrates the story of the first crime of disobedience by eating the fruit from the forbidden tree. It results in the explosion of Adam and Eve as an act of punishment (Chen, 1995). The first disobedience of humanity has been narrated by human beings in different ways. Some philosophers are of the view that Eve was responsible for first disobedience while others think that Adam is equally responsible for it because he obeyed Eve rather than God. There is the third school of thought which is of the view that Satan is responsible for the misfortune of humanity. Cain's crime of killing his innocent brother Abel had ignited the eternal conflict between evil and good in the world (Nauta, 2009).

Similarly, the ancient Greek culture also loaded its literature with the crime. Aeschylus's *Prometheus UnBound* is parallel with the crime story of Adam and Eve. Prometheus's disobedience by bringing fire to the humans had

enraged gods, and he ultimately owns eternal punishment. Sophocles's *Oedipus Rex* (1982) is also laced with the crime of incest and parricide which ultimately follow guilt and expiation. Lastly, in Euripides's *Medea* (2002) the main character committed a crime by murdering her children because she was abandoned by her husband.

Dante's *Divine Comedy* is an allegorical work about crime, punishment, and redemption which was published in 1321. Dante's *inferno* is a journey through the horrors of Hell, discovering men and women who were friend in their earthly sins and varying degrees of memorable punishment suited to each other. The horror of Hell has been narrated through men and women characters.

Shakespeare's plays are steered around in the course of criminal law and justice. *Measure for Measure* embedded with a crucial question: How much should the law be used to enforce morality? The play demonstrates the imposition of a strict law against no marital sex act as a severe crime and carries a death penalty. In *The Merchant of Venice* (2002), Shakespeare has shown us how law should be flexible and hatred can lead a man to criminal revenge. In *Julius Caesar* (1599), where the orderly- figured is killed by rebel-figured. Caesar and Brutus were the victims of crime and assassination.

Thus, crime in literature helps for the better comprehension of crime in life. It reveals something deep and timeless about human nature. The snapshot of crime provides the prevailing attitude about the nature of justice in society and fundamental anguish about a crime that menace its collective conscience (Garland, 2000). Crime in society can be best reflected through literature. Literature also provides different levels of crimes.

Historical and religious representations show that crime and criminal justice are remained problem of all societies and civilizations of the world. Humanity has changed criminal laws time to time keeping in view the complexity of social structures. Various punishment theories have been introduced to stop crimes but it is very difficult to stop criminal thinking of Human beings' mind. It is fact that thirst of power is more dangerous as compare to thirst for water.

Shakespeare is not only considered the genius of his age but of all the ages. His works are hotcakes for the researcher of all ages because these works produce new meanings and themes in every age. Mostly different researcher has researched Shakespearian tragedies in different ways such as they investigated corruption, disloyalty, feminine, brevity, betrayal, revenge, death, supernatural elements, conflict, suffering, deception, jealousy, thirst for power and supernaturalism. Shakespearian tragedies such as *Othello*, *King Lear*, and *Romeo and Juliet* are full of murders, killings, betrayal, death and revenge.

Methodology/ Theoretical Framework

This paper applies a new game theory model to demonstrate Machiavellianism. The Machiavellian social model engaged with manipulating others for personal gains, criminal self-interest and possessed Machiavellian intelligence in which an individual carried out successful engagement with other social groups. (Byrne & Whiten, 1988). The Machiavellianism is considering three concepts: views, tactics and immorality which are conceptualized by the Machiavellian agent. (Machiavelli, 2001). Views present the notion that the world consists of manipulators and manipulated (reducing the model to two kinds of agents). Tactics involve the tools of manipulation or Machiavellian strategies to achieve objectives. The immorality is concerned with the natural behavior which is opposed to conventional morals. To acquire power, survive or maintain a particular position, the Machiavellian agents exercise Machiavellian intelligence and applying distinct selfish motives or manipulated strategies that are pursuing to control the changes ensuing in the environment.

The model favors the schematic structure of analysis in the three tragedies of Shakespeare. The inductive reasoning supports poetic analysis and carried out in the light of three concepts provided by the Machiavellianism. In these plays, the actors coincide with game model theory that implements the notions of views, tactics of Machiavellianism and immorality which is characterized by the value function process resulting in the reason for deciphering control strategy of each player. (Stackelberg, 2011).

Analysis

Assassination of Hamlet

History shows that crime is a mandatory act to reach the crown/throne. In a totalitarian state, kings used this act to sustain power. It is also a fact that relationships do not have meaning in games of thrones. People forget

relationships such as brotherhood, sisterhood and even fatherhood. They kill each other just to get power. 'Hamlet' by Shakespeare is a true reflection of human beings' psyche and their journey from crimes to crowns. *Hamlet (2006)* can be approached in one of the many ways as a crime story. Claudius has not only murdered King Hamlet but also captured his crown. He has reaped all the benefits of crime. He becomes king of Denmark. The central crime of the play is the assassination of King committed by his brother. Claudius pours poison in the ear of the King while he was sleeping. Claudius tells the audience in Act III, scene. III, about the crime he committed to capture the crown and marry the queen, Gertrude. Therefore, the accession to the throne of Denmark is his motivation and even he acknowledges his act of crime prevents him from getting salvation. He is well aware that he has not only committed a mortal sin but a worse crime as well. This crime probably results in his death. There seems no outside motivation, no justification. Claudius commits crimes in a very perfect way and retains everything he desired.

The killing of old Hamlet has resemblance with assassination of Dara Shukoh. He was the eldest son of Shah Jahan who was also known as the prince of high rank. He was favored as a successor of his brother Shah Jahan and his oldest sister Jahanara. In the war of succession, after the illness of his father, Dara Shukoh was defeated by his brother Muhiuddin (Aurangzeb). Aurangzeb's henchmen assassinated Dara Shukoh in front of his son. Later he was buried in an unidentified grave (Sarkar, 1912).

The second crime in the play is committed by Hamlet by killing Polonius in Act III, scene IV. Hamlet seems very confused and annoyed after the act of mousetrap. Hamlet has thought that there is some crime and conspiracy behind different incidents such as the murder of his father, the coronation of his uncle, and marriage of his mother with his uncle. It is a fact that the prince has gotten many clues but he seems unable to arrange all these until he got missing piece of puzzle. He visits his mother's room and shouts on her that his uncle has killed his father for the crown. Behind the tapestry on the wall, Hamlet listens to noise and he stabs his sword on it. As he stabs Polonius' body falls on the ground. Hamlet utters that is it a body of king because he is thinking to kill the king. This shows the revenge of Hamlet and his rightfulness for the crown. He considers Polonius as the spy of the king. Hamlet feigns his madness to know the secret of death of his father. Some philosophers are of the view that the madness of Hamlet is an art. They consider Hamlet as an intellectual person. Through the power of intellect, he has analyzed the situation by using madness as a tool. He is not fooled at all, he is the one who makes fool to others. It seems that Hamlet is in search of the beneficiary of his father's death. He times and again remembers that Claudius must have left some clues of crime.

The third and final crime takes place in the last scene of Act V. Claudius and Laertes want to kill Hamlet, so they have planned to do so in a fencing match. Claudius convinces Laertes by saying that Hamlet is not only responsible of the death of his father but also the death of Ophelia. It is a fact that Laertes has some justifications to commit a crime against the Hamlet but Claudius does not have any. Claudius is the person who knows that Hamlet is an intelligent person with university education. Hamlet's silence creates an alarming and fearful noise in the mind of his uncle. He thinks that Hamlet maybe successful in proving the murder of his father. Claudius wants to hide himself from his nephew.

Crime in Macbeth

Thirst for power generates enmity between masters and slaves, kings and soldiers, colonizers and colonized and even father and son. *Macbeth (1990)* by Shakespeare is representation of a crime committed by a soldier against the king just to occupy the throne. The story of crime could be witnessed in *Macbeth (1990)* even the worst possible crime of regicide i.e. the killing of one's king. Macbeth as a successful warrior of Scotland informed by Three Witches that he is to become a King. But Macbeth becomes upset when King Duncan nominates his son Malcolm as his heir. Macbeth is fallible and desperately wants the crown. He is, therefore, easily manipulated by the witches and his ambitious wife. To achieve the crown, he commits a crime of regicide at Macbeth's castle. Macbeth is duly proclaimed as the new King of Scotland. Thus, it begins the unending crime and downfall to preserve his kingship. He kills the groom, orders the killing of Banquo and Fleance as a second prophecy of the witches and the slaughter of Macduff's family.

Macbeth seems to twist his arm to kill Duncan in his first crime, but, then, he starts on his course of bloodletting and becomes more murderous and monster. He did not take any courage from his wife while he

planned to kill Macduff's wife and son. Even Malcolm talks about his assessment of him as a 'dead butcher' (Act, V, scene, VI). It could seem to be quite in maintaining his actions for most of the play.

Thus, Macbeth's vaulting ambition for the crown and prophecies of witches make the situation favorable for the crime of regicide. However, Macbeth's fallibility leads to his ultimate downfall and his incessant crimes are beyond all salvation. The witches have provided a causal link to his crimes but his gullibility and lack of intelligence failed to perceive equivocation of the matter.

Shakespeare like Hermann Hesse has also presented a very negative role of the supernatural things which stimulate human beings in committing crimes. The role of the three witches in Macbeth represents that human beings are puppet in the hand of supernatural creation. Hesse is also of the view that binaries exist everywhere and if someone wants to get enlightenment he must get the knowledge of the whole world, even the knowledge of the negative things. His writings reflect that negative thinking and crime are integral part of human beings' life. Macbeth has committed crime to capture the throne.

Crime in King Lear

Similarly, *King Lear* (1897) is, at its best, be narrated as the story of crime and malevolent plot against the crown by his two daughters (Goneril and Regan) and Gloucester's illegitimate son, Edmund. The actions of Goneril and Regan play a vital role in Lear's dethronement and his ultimate tragic downfall. Though King Lear's folly and harsh treatment of Cordelia and Kent led him to correct observation that "I am a man more sinned against than sinning" (Act III, Scene II, Lines 60-61).

To seek refuge in relieving himself from the problems, King Lear divides up his kingdom into three portions to each of his daughters. (Act I, Scene I, Line 41). King Lear announces a competitor to decide which one of the daughters should retain the largest portion of the kingdom. It seems that his theory of competition merely serves to nourish his ego and flattery which called up the subsequent crime to be committed for the crown. Both Regan and Goneril tell his father what he wanted to hear that doled out his flattery. While Cordelia speaks honestly of her love for her father; however, it would become indispensable when she gets married. Lear, in the shroud of selfishness who values superficial display of affection over honesty, irrationally banished Cordelia and Kent. Therefore, this act of crime has paid him severely punished and was being expelled from his crown. He had experienced madness and losing everyone that he loves.

Regan and Goneril are persistently unpleasant characters in the play. Both are at first portrayed as not being the favorite of their father. But soon it was discovered that their true natures are equally devious and cruel. Goneril hatches a plan to oust her father from his seat of power by undermining him and ordering the servants to ignore his requests. The sisters share the ambitious traits of Lady Macbeth but go further by participating and reveling in the violence that ensues. The murderous sisters embody frightening and unwavering inhumanity as they kill and maim in the pursuit of self-gratification. Lear's horrendous crime of banishing Cordelia from a bequest, King Lear divides the nation between his two daughters. He put himself at the mercy of Goneril and Regan who intrigued against her father and owe the possession of home and power of crown. He was soon thrown into a wild storm to die. Thus, from the play, it is observed that both sisters have shown their self-interest and self-seeking monstrosity of wanting more than they are truly entitled to. In the end, it is widely accepted that justice has been served because of their punishment completely coincide with their crime.

Conclusion

Shakespeare is, no doubt, widely recognized as the master and forefather of every anecdote from family drama to historical epic. Every play of Shakespeare, whether it is a tragedy, comedy or history, can be possibly viewed as crime fiction and intrigued for the crown. The paper has taken his three tragic masterpieces i.e. *Hamlet*, *Macbeth* and *King Lear* as a case study for the ambition of achieving political power and crown and can be best interpreted through the lens of crime. In *Hamlet*, Claudius deliberates crime of regicide and his marriage to Gertrude, Hamlet is haggard and driven hard to solve the murder of his father and abdicate Claudius as usurper, all the events are knitted in a form of journey to the crown. Similarly, *King Lear* is also a story of crime, power, poverty and inheritance. At the start of the play, Lear holds immense power of crown and authority. Cordelia who is an honest woman to the kingdom and her subsequent banishment from the empire begets one crime over the other.

Meantime, his two daughters express the dark purpose and turn against him. Weeds have replaced his golden crown which signifies his loss of kingship. Moreover, Edmund also manipulates further and hold himself as suitable candidates for the crown and inheritance. He joined the dark forces of greed and ambition for power but the horrors of dark power did not last long and all archetypal crime has met the end of the journey to Edgar as the deserving king. All these characters and plays have a very realistic portrayal of the Machiavellian concept of a prince. The prince which Machiavelli favors is portrayed through different characters in these Shakespearian plays. The concept of morality, ethics, and fair play have no values for the Machiavellian prince. We do find the same depiction in these plays that the writer has depicted how the journey starts with a crime and reaches to achieve the ultimate power. In a nutshell, behind every powerful position, a crime is involved, and, to protect themselves, they will have to commit more and more crimes so that they could justify their crown.

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