

HYPERMASCULINITY TRAITS IN WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S MACBETH

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Abstract

This descriptive study utilizes the hypermasculinity approach using textual analysis. This method brings out various indicators of hypermasculinity traits in Shakespeare's Macbeth. The hypermasculinity traits that served as the criteria for the critique are categorized into three (3) based on the levels of hypermasculinity, namely: Coldness: stoicism, relational cut-off, fearlessness; Sociopathy: vanity, manipulation, selfishness, irrationality; and Hostility: violence, hyper-aggression, perverseness were sourced out from Hypermasculinity Inventory of Mosher and Sirkin. Results have shown that all the levels of Hypermasculinity such as Coldness, Sociopathy, and Hostility were visible in the character of Macbeth, and no evidence was found concerning Banquo and Malcolm. It proved that the play emphasizes various acts that demonstrate hypermasculinity anchored from the data gathered, thus strengthening textual evidence. Hence, the play Macbeth focuses on the idea that being a "real man" means being strong, brave, loyal, compassionate, and honorable instead of violent and stoic.

Keywords: Hypermasculinity, Coldness, Sociopathy, Hostility.

Introduction

The word Hypermasculinity refers to the exaggeration of male stereotypical behavior, emphasizing physical strength, aggression, and sexuality. Donald L. Mosher and Mark Sirkin (1984), conducted one of the primary studies on hypermasculinity. In their book entitled *Hyper Sexual, Hyper Masculine*, explained hypermasculinity or the "macho personality" as consisting of three variables such as callous sexual attitudes toward women, the belief that violence is manly, and the experience of danger as exciting [1].

In most cases, the identification of hyper-masculine traits only focuses more on the outside physical aspects of violence, danger, and sexual aggression, and less consideration is given to the emotive characteristics that specify those men deemed "hypermasculine." Likely, hyper-masculine attitudes involve emotional self-control as a sign of toughness. This toughness is what Scheff calls "character" callousness in times of high stress or emotion. Of this hypermasculine stoicism, Scheff further observes that a man with a character who is experiencing stress is still firm [4].

Furthermore, Messerschmidt explained hypermasculinity as exaggerated stereotypical male behaviors like being active, aggressive, and womanizer [2]. Hypermasculinity is a substantial means of sexual assault, while some of the attackers may be hypermasculine, more of them do not resort to assault to make themselves feel that they are sturdy and robust.

Jeffrey Jerome Cohen in his *Monster theory* claims that the monster is born as a representation of a particular cultural moment and entirely contains fear, desire, and anxiety [3]. Shakespeare's plays feature many different forms of monsters. Consequently, the monsters in Macbeth portray no outer deformity. The characters in Macbeth expose the monstrous beasts that lie within each.

Macbeth is on the boundary of this study, and perhaps his character creates a break in hypermasculine identities.

Thus, this study analyzes how hyper-masculinity traits are revealed in the characters of William Shakespeare's "Macbeth." Specifically, it answers these queries: (1) How is the trait of coldness, sociopathy, and hostility reflected in Macbeth concerning Banquo and Malcolm in specific

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episodes? (2) Collectively, how do these hypermasculinity traits of Macbeth concerning Banquo and Malcolm contribute to the tragic theme of the play?

Research Method Used

This study utilizes qualitative research using literary/textual analysis on the hypermasculinity approach. The hypermasculinity traits that would serve as the criteria for the critique are categorized into three (3) based on the levels of hypermasculinity namely: **Coldness**: stoicism, relational cut-off, fearlessness; **Sociopathy**: vanity, manipulation, selfishness, irrationality; and **Hostility**: violence, hyper-aggression, perverseness.

The primary source of data is the textuality of the tragedy *MACBETH* by William Shakespeare in five acts. The main male characters with violent traits across the acts and scenes are selected: Macbeth, Banquo, and Malcolm. The traits of coldness, sociopathy, and hostility are sourced from the Hypermasculinity Inventory by Mosher and Sirkin (1984).

Results and Discussion of the Text

1. The trait of coldness is reflected in Macbeth concerning Banquo and Malcolm in specific episodes.

The trait of Coldness refers to unfeeling, unemotional, affectionless, coldness-hearted, lacking empathy, etc. A hypermasculine man has a quality of coldness when he has the characteristics of stoicism, relational cut-off, and fearlessness.

Shakespeare's play *Macbeth* is a great example of gender hypermasculinity. His moral transformation from valiant to vile led him to display his stoic behavior, relational cut off and fearless attitude toward others. These are all manifested under Coldness as one element of hypermasculine behavior.

Macbeth's reaction to his wife's insulting statements" enables him to transform into stoic and violent. Macbeth asserts his manliness over his wife not far from a stereotypical villain as seen in Act III, Scene 2. He has also proven himself as a man who threatens other men's masculinity. He hires murderers to kill his dearest friend and comrade Banquo, to kill Macduff's family as shown in Act III, Scene 1. Stoicism revealed in his character that he has the quality to stay composed despite the serial murder reducing his human characteristics still further until he appears to be the more dominant partner in marriage.

Like Macbeth, Banquo's characteristics depict him as open to human fondness: For example, his sharp

hearing of what the witches have predicted in him as seen in Act I, Scene 3. Macbeth enslaves to such an extent that provokes Banquo's comment that he is extremely fascinated with the witches' words (Act I Scene 3), however, Banquo is doubtful and does not give much value to what they say. It only shows that he is incorruptible which a sign of non-stoic behavior is.

If Macbeth is a stereotypical villain and a stoic person, Malcolm is the embodiment of all that is good as a person. He could stay in Scotland after his father and urge his men, particularly Banquo or Macduff to look for the murderer and take revenge, yet he preferred to move out for the safety of their lives, especially his brother.

Another characteristic of the hypermasculinity trait of Coldness is Relational Cut-off. It applies to the cut of the ties in a particular relationship as experienced by Macbeth toward his master and friend. He killed Duncan through his hand, as seen in Act II, Scene 2, his trusted friend Banquo and even the family of Macduff. These are some of the stereotypical negative traits of masculinity.

Banquo, on the other hand, does not exhibit such traits even until his death. He is faithful, as always loyal to the king and at the same time to his friend, as seen in his response to Macbeth in Act II Scene I.

Likely, Malcolm demonstrates relational cut-off only to those who betrayed them. As seen in Act I Scene II when the Thane of Cawdor betrayed them. Another line that suggests relational cut-off is when Malcolm instructed his men, particularly Macduff not to give him another chance to Macbeth as revealed in Act V Scene 4.

Fearlessness is the last trait of hypermasculinity Coldness. Fearlessness refers to the absence of fear in an individual. Macbeth and Banquo are presented in the play as brave warrior heroes, whose fame on the battlefield wins them great honor from the king. Macbeth's sign of coldness is evident when he does not have any difficulty in murdering the king. He pulls his power not from being a compassionate villain, but from being a compelling portrait of evil, fascinating but not pleasant. Banquo on the other hand considered a brave and just warrior as proven in his words in Act I Scene 3.

Likely, after Duncan's death, Malcolm quickly ascertains the danger of remaining in Scotland and flees the country (Act II, Scene 3). However, this does not mean he is a cowardly fellow. He only thinks about the safety of his brother. When he reappears in Act IV Scene 3, he gained the support of the king of England and gave him men to lead. It

only shows that he has the courage and is ready to face Macbeth as seen in Act IV, Scene 4.

The play exhibits coldness, distance, and indifference and develops and revolves around these qualities in Macbeth.

2. The trait of sociopathy is reflected in Macbeth concerning Banquo and Malcolm in specific episodes.

Another characteristic of hyper-masculinity is Sociopathy which refers to attributes of a person having a personality disorder thus manifesting his extreme antisocial behavior and lack of conscience. Sociopathy includes Vanity, Manipulation, Selfishness, and Irrationality.

Vanity is the term used to refer to the quality of a person who has too much pride in their appearance, abilities, and achievements. Thus, Macbeth possesses these characteristics as shown in Act I, Scene 7. Macbeth's vanity of human wishes and a man with super courage who is capable of great brutality.

Banquo, on the other hand, does not possess such characteristics, (Act I, Scene 4). He has modest behavior to accept his commendation of Duncan when the latter hugged him. Like Banquo, Malcolm doesn't possess such a trait. Malcolm is the perfect person who has stable characteristics and control over his ambition and is not easily persuaded by his destructive actions

Manipulation as a character trait of sociopathy refers to managing, controlling, or influencing something or someone to serve one's purpose or one's advantage. Macbeth also possesses this characteristic when he approached Banquo and attempts to manipulate his mind regarding his plan as seen in Act II, Scene 1. Even committing a series of crimes to fulfill his ambition is also a form of manipulation.

Meanwhile, Banquo and Malcolm don't possess this trait. Banquo has proven that he has a gift of gab, he can convince his men to take revenge against Macbeth, as seen in Act IV Scene 3, this may not mean manipulation, but it proves that he has the manifestation of a good leader.

Selfishness as one characteristic of Sociopathy relates to having or showing concern only for oneself and not the care for other people's needs. Macbeth's obsession with his ambition to become a king, by doing every means even killing the persons he thought would be the obstacle to his plan depicts selfishness.

Meanwhile, Banquo doesn't possess the trait of selfishness. He always remained loyal to the crown until his last breath.

Likewise, Malcolm doesn't have a selfish act. After his father's death, he moved to England not only for his self-interest but for his people who suffered at the hands of Macbeth, as shown in Act V, Scene 8.

Irrationality is the last trait of sociopathy that refers to the inability to think. Macbeth's fascination with the witches' words led him to act like an irrational being and blinded by his thirst for power. He didn't spare time to think or even use his conscience when he killed innocent people to satisfy his wife and his ambition as seen in Act II and Act III.

On the contrary, Banquo is an epitome of a real soldier, a friend, and a father whose actions also rely on reason. Despite the words from the witches, he used his mind and conscience not to take action that could harm his king and the people he loved.

Like Banquo, Malcolm is the opposite of Macbeth's character. He controls himself and does not make bad decisions, as seen in Act IV.

Hence, the trait of Sociopathy is also evident in the character of Macbeth. Macbeth is a sociopath, because those described as sociopaths may appear disturbed. He is manipulative, often lies lack empathy, and has a weak conscience that allows him to act recklessly or aggressively, even when knew his behavior is wrong. Macbeth is the total opposite of Banquo and Malcolm.

3. The trait of hostility revealed in Macbeth concerning Banquo and Malcolm in specific episodes

Some texts and lines suggest hostility within the level of hypermasculinity was also evident in the play. Within this category, there are three indicators such as violence, hyper-aggressiveness, and perverseness. Violence refers to the use of force or energy to harm someone or damage property. Macbeth commits successive violence when he kills the king, Banquo, and even Macduff's family as evident first in Act II.

Macbeth's powerful features are noticeable compared to Banquo and Malcolm. No lines indicate that Banquo and Malcolm commit violence as one indicator of hypermasculinity.

Another characteristic of Hostility is Hyper-aggressive, this refers to excessive or extreme actions that Macbeth also possessed. Through a series of crimes from Duncan in Act II, Scene 1; Banquo in Act III, Scene I and Macduff's family in

Act IV, There are no lines that show that the two commit hyper-aggressiveness.

The last indicator of Hostility is Perverseness which pertains to wrong or different in a way that others feel offensive arising from or indicative of stubbornness. Macbeth's obsession with his ambition and committing a series of murders to fulfill his goal are manifestations of perverseness. These indicators are not evident concerning Banquo and Malcolm.

Hence, the level of hostility as an indicator of hypermasculinity is evident in Macbeth's character. The causative events give him violent action in the context.

4. The hyper-masculinity traits in Macbeth concerning Banquo and Malcolm contribute to the tragic theme of the play.

The dominant categories of Coldness, Sociopathy, and Hostility in the character of Macbeth concerning Banquo and Malcolm proved that the play emphasizes various acts that illustrate hypermasculinity.

Macbeth exhibits elements of hypermasculinity that reflect the tragic theme in the play which is the fall of man. From his position of superiority to a place of downfall on account of his ambitious pride. Macbeth has acted tyrannically, criminally, and sinfully. Thus, his arrogance led to his downfall.

Concerning Banquo, he shows integrity in many ways throughout the entire play through his actions towards the other characters. This trait helps to personify what kind of person Banquo was and what kind of person he was becoming. His characteristics led to his death. His non-hypermasculine behavior and his death contribute to the tragic theme that allows the downfall of Macbeth.

Malcolm likewise does NOT possess hypermasculine behavior. The non-hypermasculine behavior of Malcolm gained sympathy from the people who loved his father, his kingdom, and himself, particularly Macduff, allowing them to win back their territory, to crown him as king of Scotland led to the downfall of Macbeth.

Conclusion

The hypermasculinity traits are revealed in the character of William Shakespeare's Macbeth. It focuses on negative features like cruelty, lack of guilt, and violence including murder instead of positive masculine characteristics such as honor, courage, compassion, and loyal.

Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest between the authors in this manuscript.

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