

## Chapter Two

### The cause of misjudgements

As I mentioned before, the misjudgements of the four protagonists lead to their final catastrophes. The causes of the misjudgements for Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, and Macbeth are all different; however, some similarities can be detected. Because of their character flaws and singular circumstances, the four protagonists mix up the appearance and reality and make the huge mistakes.

The misjudgement in Hamlet is caused by Hamlet listening to the ghost, which tells him that his uncle, Claudius, is the murderer of his father; and he cannot differentiate the fact with illusion. In the beginning of the play, Hamlet just explains the appearance and reality of his behavior to his mother while his mother persuades him to show friendship to his uncle.

HAMLET Seems, madam? Nay, it is. I know not 'seems'  
'tis not alone my inky cloak, good-mother,

.....

Together with all forms, modes, shows of grief

That can denote me truly. These indeed 'seem',

For they are actions that a man might play;

But I have that within which passeth show---

These but the trappings and the suits of woe. (Ham.1.2.76-86)

From the above, we can see that Hamlet is really in sorrow about his father's death, and he explains this to his mother. However, ironically, he is trapped in the situation which makes him mix up appearance and reality later on.

After seeing the image of his father's "Ghost", Hamlet did not seek revenge for his father to kill Claudius immediately; instead, he pretends to be mad in order to

observe the conditions in the castle. The truth is that Hamlet questions the Ghost's trustworthiness. "What if the Ghost is not a true spirit, but rather an agent of the devil sent to tempt him?" "What if killing Claudius results in Hamlet having to relive his memories for all eternity?" Hamlet agonizes over what he perceives as his cowardice because he cannot stop himself from thinking these questions. (Stockton 11)

Hamlet may have an aversion to violence, and he does live by strict Christian principles.

QUEEN GERTRUDE Good Hamlet, cast thy nightly colour off,  
 And let thine eye look like a friend on Denmark.  
 Do not for ever with thy veiled lids  
 Seek for thy noble father in the dust. (Ham.1.2.68-71)

That Hamlet still wears a black robe in order to grieve for his father means that he follows the traditional principles, and also respects life.

HAMLET O that this too too solid flesh would melt,  
 Thaw, and resolve itself into a dew,  
 Or that the Everlasting had not fixed  
 His cannon against self-slaughter... (Ham.1.2.129-32)

His mother's remarriage makes him so sad that he wants to commit suicide but to do that, he thinks, is committing a crime.

The meaning of his affectation of being a mad person is ambiguous. The madness will make him unnoticeable that he might observe and prepare the best way and best time for his revenge. However, from the madness, on the other hand, could be viewed as "Hamlet is a pure child who cannot grow up and accept the burdens of adulthood, including his duties to revenge for his slain father." (Stockton 36)

Hamlet is noble in principle but he is still influenced by his circumstances to

make the mistakes. He is trapped in a situation where to do nothing is to encourage the spread of evil and to act is to become part of it. While he is considering killing Claudius, the attendant circumstances prevent him from doing so and also push him to make the misjudgement later on. By killing Polonius wrongly, Hamlet is punished by exile to England, and this fact indirectly leads to the death of Ophelia. He is forced to fight with Laertes who wants to seek revenge for his father, Polonius, and his sister, Ophelia. This fight at the end causes Hamlet's death.

As for Hamlet's character, in Hamlet and Oedipus, the psychoanalyst Earnest Jones writes that Hamlet's hesitation to kill his uncle is much-debated, and it should be explained in terms of internal rather than external circumstance. In his carefully documented essay, Jones builds a highly persuasive case history of Hamlet as a psychoneurotic who suffers from manic-depressive hysteria combined with an abulia, an inability to exercise will power and come to decisions, all of which may be traced to the hero's severely repressed Oedipal feelings. (Guerin 161-62) Jones identifies that Hamlet's mental problem has made him delaying his revenge. However, if we psycho-analyze Hamlet's character by Freudian theory, we may have another interpretation. By examining Freudian theory about his three psychic zones: the id, the ego, and the superego, may give some explanation of Hamlet's behavior. According to Freud, he explains that the id is the primary source of all psychic energy, and it is one of the obscure inaccessible parts of our personality; it has no organization or unified will, only an impulsion to obtain satisfaction for the instinctual needs. The id, in short, is the source of all our aggressions and desires. Its function is to gratify our instincts for pleasure without regard for social conventions, legal ethics, or moral restraint. Unchecked, it would lead us to destruction and even self-destruction to satisfy its impulses for pleasure. In view of the id's dangerous potentialities, it is

necessary that other psychic agencies protect the individual and society. The first of these regulating agencies that which protects the individual is the ego. This is the rational governing agent of the psyche. It regulates the instinctual drives of the id so that they may be released in nondestructive behavioral patterns. Though a large portion of the ego is unconscious, the ego nevertheless comprises what we ordinarily think of as the conscious mind. The other regulating agent that which primarily functions to protect society is the superego. Largely unconscious, the superego is the moral censoring agency. It serves to repress or inhibit the drives of the id, to block off and thrust back those impulses toward pleasure that society regards as unacceptable. Therefore, the id is dominated by the pleasure principle, the ego is the reality principle, and the superego is dominated by the morality principle. We might say that the id would make us devils, that the superego would make us behave as angels or, worse, as creatures of absolute social conformity, and that it remains for the ego to keep us healthy human beings by maintaining a balance between these two opposing forces. (Guerin 156-58)

On the other hand, using energy to satisfy the instinctive expectation is called instinctive object-choice or object-cathexes. As Freud points out in The Ego and the Id, “we can suppose that object-cathexes proceed from the id, which feels erotic trends as needs. The ego, which to begin with is still feeble, becomes aware of the object-cathexes, and either acquiesces in them or tries to fend them off by the process of repression.” (23) Hamlet’s hesitation is possibly from the struggle among his id, ego, and superego. According to Jones, Hamlet has severely repressed Oedipal feelings which comes from his mental disturbance. But for Freud, the Oedipus complex derives from an infant’s unconscious rivalry with his father for the love of his mother. The id represents Hamlet’s strong love for his mother, but his desire to kill his uncle is restrained by the social convention, or the

superego. According to The Ego and the Id, Freud points out that “the ego ideal (superego) had the task of repressing the Oedipus complex.” (30) Hamlet’s superego, at this time, represses the inclination toward Oedipal feelings in Hamlet’s mind. Hamlet behaves as a good son, by the societal standards, who obeys his mother’s will. Hence, confronted with his mother’s remarriage, Hamlet only gives a silent objection. But at the meantime, his love and hate relationship is also revealed.

HAMLET Within a month,

Ere yet the salt of most unrighteous tears

Had left the flushing of her galled eyes,

She married. O most wicked speed, to post

With such dexterity to incestuous sheets!

It is not, nor it cannot come to good.

But break, by heart, for I must hold my tongue. (Ham.1.2.153-59)

Besides, Hamlet’s uncle, Claudius can also be viewed as Hamlet’s id part, the unspoken desire. Hamlet’s view of Claudius represents his repressed hostility toward his father as a rival for his mother’s affection. This new king-father is the symbolic perpetrator of the very deeds toward which the son is impelled by his own unconscious motives: murder of his father and incest with his mother. “Hamlet cannot bring himself to kill Claudius because to do so he must, in a psychological sense, kill himself.” His delay and frustration in trying to fulfill the ghost’s demand for revenge may therefore be explained by the fact that, as Jones writes it, “the thought of incest and parricide combined is too intolerable to be borne. One part of him tries to carry out the task, the other flinches inexorably from the thought of it.” (Guerin 163)

Furthermore, Hamlet’s ego makes him to pretend to be insane. The ego is

governed by the reality principle in his mind which prevents him from revealing his intention of revenge. Hence, by feigning insanity, he can wait for the best time to seek revenge. According to Freud's The Ego and the Id, "the object-cathexes proceed from the id, which feels erotic trends as needs; and the ego, which to begin with is still feeble, becomes aware of the object-cathexes, and either acquiesces in them or tries to fend them off by the process of repression." (23) In this case, Hamlet's behavior could be explained that he acquiesces in his uncle's wicked behavior and chooses to fend them off. In Hamlet's mind, the process of repression persists, causing his indecision and ultimately leading him to pretend to lose his mind.

Furthermore, there is a conflict of Hamlet's attitude toward his two fathers—the father-ghost and the king-father, Claudius. For Hamlet, the ghost represents his noble father, the socially acceptable image.

HAMLET See what a grace was seated on this brow—  
Hyperion's curls, the front of Jove himself,  
An eye like Mars, to threaten or command,  
A station like the herald Mercury  
New lighted on a heaven-kissing hill;  
A combination and a form indeed  
Where every god did seem to set his seal  
To give the world assurance of a man.  
This was your husband. (Ham.3.4.54-62)

And Claudius, on the other hand, represents the hateful and tyrannical uncle- father.

HAMLET Look you now what follows.  
Here is your husband, like a mildewed ear  
Blasting his wholesome brother. Have you eyes?

Could you on this fair mountain leave to feed,

And batten on this moor? (Ham.3.4.62-66)

Because the father-ghost alleges Claudius as his murderer, Hamlet should seek revenge against Claudius. However, Hamlet cannot kill Claudius because he is the current king and his stepfather. In fact, Hamlet's indecisiveness is one of his character flaws, and the "internal circumstance", as Jones says, is also the cause of his misjudgement.

Again in Othello, Othello is deceived by the honest appearance of Iago. The issue in Othello rests on the convention of "the calumniator believed". Othello falls a victim to Iago's treachery, but at the same time, he is a wise statesman, an experienced soldier, and a master among men. As Act I ends, Othello, the brave Moor, is preparing to go to battle, after Duke's persuasion:

DUKE The Turk with a most mighty preparation makes for Cyprus.  
 ...You must therefore be content to slubber the gloss of your new  
 fortunes with this more stubborn and boisterous expedition.

(Oth.1.3.220-26)

But at the opening of Act II, the war is over, the Turks are defeated, and Othello and the victors are ready to land in Cyprus.

THIED GENTLEMAN News, lads! Our wars are done.

The desperate tempest hath so banged the Turks

That their designment halts. A noble ship of Venice

Hath seen a grievous wrack and sufferance

On most part of their fleet. (Oth.2.1.20-24)

By having the war take place so quickly and end quickly as well, Shakespeare sends us a message that Othello is not a story of political intrigue and valor under battle.

Instead, Othello is about domesticity, skirmishes, and the battles that fill life in the domestic field. (Maurer 18)

In fact, Shakespeare presents Othello as a noble, simple, sensible, efficient man suddenly assailed and overthrown by the passion of jealousy. The passion makes Othello credulous and easily manipulated by the seemingly honest appearance of Iago. Iago wants Othello to believe that his wife, Desdemona, has committed adultery with his lieutenant, Cassio. He makes up a cunning plot, and knows Othello will accept the false and evil fiction just because Othello has good nature in his character:

IAGO After some time to abuse Othello's ears  
 That he [Cassio] is too familiar with his wife;  
 He [Cassio] hath a person and a smooth dispose  
 To be suspected, framed to make women false.  
 The Moor is of a free and open nature,  
 That thinks men honest that but seem to be so,  
 And will as tenderly be led by th' nose  
 As asses are. (Oth.1.3.377-84)

Othello's good nature leads him to believe the falsehood plotted by Iago and doubt Desdemona's honesty.

The different personalities of Othello, Iago, and Desdemona can also explain the reasons for confusing of appearance and reality. We identify Othello as a complete, self-controlled, noble, imposing man, and totally honest warrior and hero. He looks confident, naïve, and simple-minded, but after being convinced by seeing his wife's handkerchief, he becomes furiously jealous and loses his mind. Othello is a representative of human weakness and it is this human nature which leads to his tragedy. On the other hand, Iago looks like a very 'honest' and loyal person in



appearance. In fact, he is the most evil person. He is also one of Shakespeare's greatest villains, and “finest Machiavellian characters”. (Maurer 21) He is a master manipulator of people, as seen in the way he handles Roderigo, his wife, Emilia, and his experienced commander, Othello. He can skillfully get them to do just what he wants. All these people are deceived by the perfect appearance which Iago constructs. Even when Iago admits to Roderigo that he is not a good person, Roderigo still does not heed of his words:

IAGO For when my outward action doth demonstrate

That native act and figure of my heart

In compliment extern, 'tis not long after

But I will wear my heart upon my sleeve

For daws to peck at. I am not what I am. (Oth.1.1.61-65)

Desdemona is truthful to her husband; however, ironically, she is accused of being a liar in front of her husband. She remains silent even under the exigencies of the plot. Though Othello knows the handkerchief has been lost and tries to question her about this, she fails to say anything about it. Her silence furthers Othello's misjudgement.

We can also use Othello's jealousy as a theme to explore how Othello changes his character. By applying Freudian theory of the three psychic zones, we can analyze Othello's psychological condition in this play. According to Belsey, in the Renaissance, with its developing sense of national identity, and an emerging white racism as the legitimization of a growing slave trade, England often regarded with mounting suspicion of other races. And the vice, like the devil, had long been represented as black, the traditional color of the darkness of hell. (139) Thus, Othello, a passionate moor with dark skin, may be viewed as an erotic, evil and

inferior person. We can find this despidal from the text, as Othello is identified as ‘the thick-lip owe’ (Oth.1.1.66); ‘an old clack ram (Othello) is tuppung your white ewe (Desdemona) (Oth.1.1.88); ‘a Barbary horse’ who will give Brabantio’s family ‘nephews to neigh to you’ (Oth.1.1.113-14). Desdemona is imaged in ‘the gross clasps of a lascivious Moor’ (Oth.1.1.127). Furthermore, Brabantio tells Othello that he cannot believe that his daughter would voluntarily leave her home for ‘the sooty bosom of such a thing as thou’ (Oth.1.2.71-72). However, these are not the whole truth about Othello. Othello is not a bad person as implied by his appearance. In the beginning of the play, Othello is a well disciplined person; in fact, he is a general in the military service of Venice for a long time.

OTHELLO For since these arms of mine had seven years’ pith

Till now some nine moons wasted, they have used

Their dearest action in the tented field; ... (Oth.1.3.83-85)

Besides, the Duke of Venice has great praise for Othello. He thinks Othello is the best person to fight with the Turks.

DUKE The Turk with a most mighty preparation makes for

Cyprus. Othello, the fortitude of the place is best known to

You, and though we have there a substitute of most allowed

Sufficiency, yet opinion, a sovereign mistress of effects,

Throws a more safer voice on you.... (Oth.1.3.220-24)

Othello behaves well and follows the laws strictly so that he has earned the honor from his people and the Duke. In the war, he fights bravely against the enemy to protect his people. He follows strictly the rules of the military. These are the social expectation for a hero. Othello’s heroic image can be explained as a symbolic embodiment of his superego. However, Iago’s plot breaks Othello’s controlled life

and thrusts Othello back into the unconscious obscure inaccessible part of his id, which makes him a murderous jealous husband, since the id knows no values, no good or evil, and no morality.

Iago is the agent which pushes Othello into this destruction. As Iago's cunning plot progresses, Othello's character changes from that of a confident magnanimous soldier to a doubtful, suspicious husband.

OTHELLO My services which I have done the signiory  
 Shall out-tongue his complaints. 'Tis yet to know—  
 Which, when I know that boasting is an honor,  
 I shall promulgate—I fetch my life and being  
 From men of royal siege, and my demerits  
 May speak unbonneted to as proud a fortune  
 As this that I have reached (Oth.1.2.18-24)

From the speech above, we can see that Othello is very confident in himself, and superbly sure of his power. However, as Iago's plot continues, Othello starts to doubt himself.

OTHELLO Haply for I am black,  
 And have not those soft parts of conversation  
 That chamberers have; or for I am declined  
 Into the vale of years—yet that's not much—  
 She's gone (Oth.3.3.268-72)

The circumstances have influenced Othello's character thoroughly. From Freudian theory, Othello's id leads him totally to his destruction. He becomes an uncontrolled monster so that he kills his wife so quickly without giving her the opportunity to clarify her "guilt" on the second night in Cyprus. His id makes him believe that his

wife is dishonest and has to be punished. However, Frank Kermode points out that “Othello’s early appearance of good nature is merely a compensation for his suspicion and insecurity”. (1249) If so, Iago is still the reason which leads Othello to break with his superego and reverts to his id and self-destruction at the end.

In King Lear, there are also problems of confusing the “appearance and reality”. First of all, in the beginning of the play, Lear states that he intends to retire himself from the political power and duties.

LEAR Meantime we shall express our darker purposes.

Give me the map there. Know that we have divided

In three our kingdom, and ‘tis our fast intent

To shake all cares and business from our age,

Conferring them on younger strengths while we

Unburdened crawl toward death. (Lr.1.1.34-39)

Therefore, he attempts to divide his kingdom equally among his three daughters.

However, Lear stages a love test to see that who loves him best. The two elder daughters, Goneril and Regan, exaggerate their love by telling their father that their affection for him exceeds all reasonable expectations.

GONERIL Sir, I love you more than words can wield the matter;

Dearer than eyesight, space, and liberty;

Beyond what can be valued, rich or rare,

No less than life; with grace, health, beauty, honour;

As much as child e’er loved or father found;

A love that makes breath poor and speech unable.

Beyond all manner of so much I love you. (Lr.1.1.53-59)

Then, Lear asks Regan how much she loves him. Regan answers with exaggeration

similar to her sister, Goneril.

REGAN ...I profess

Myself an enemy to all other joys

Which the most precious square of sense possesses,

And find I am alone felicitate

In your dear highness' love. (Lr.1.1.70-74)

Cordelia, then tells Lear that she loves him, but only as a daughter loves a father.

She said, "I love your majesty/ According to my bond, no more nor less." (Lr.1.1.90)

King Lear, of course, has been pleased to hear the protestations of love from his elder

daughters. He felt angry and disappointed when Cordelia said that she loved him,

but only as a daughter should love a father. With the anger and disappointment

toward Cordelia, Lear divides his kingdom equally between Goneril and Regan, and

banishes Cordelia. He rashly disinherits the child who truly loves him. King Lear

is a domestic story about the daughters' love toward their father. Lear cannot

distinguish who really loves him. His pride covers his eyes and influences his

judgements. In this case, his three daughters: Goneril, Regan, and Cordelia represent

the differences between appearance and reality. And Lear's misjudgement of reality

and appearance is the cause of his tragedy.

Lear is unable to differentiate appearance from reality just like Hamlet and

Othello. His superego makes him believe his two elder daughters' professed love,

which in actuality is too exaggerated to be true. In addition, he refuses to accept

Cordelia's true statement of love, just because the announcement of love is too plain

and not sweet enough for his ear.

Since Cordelia is the youngest daughter; however, Lear loves her more and

expects more of her. We can see this from these words of King Lear: "I loved her

most, and thought to set my rest/ On her kind nursery.” (Lr.1.1.121) When Lear tries to parcel out his kingdom to Cordelia, he even decides to leave the “more opulent” lot to Cordelia:

LEAR [To CORDELIA] Now our joy,  
 Although our last and least, to whose young love  
 The vines of France and milk of Burgundy  
 Strive to be interested: What can you say to draw  
 A third more opulent than your sisters? Speak. (Lr.1.1.80-84)

From the words above, we can see that Cordelia is Lear’s favorite daughter; he loves her more, and naturally, will expect more of her. Therefore, when Goneril and Regan speak their glossy announcements, Lear expects Cordelia to speak more appealing words than her sisters. Nevertheless, Cordelia just answers, “Nothing.” Perhaps Lear can not believe what he hears; therefore, he desires for Cordelia to say more: “How, how, Cordelia? Mend your speech a little/ Lest you may mar your fortunes.” (Lr.1.1.93) To apply Freudian theory, Lear, with his superego (his pride), expects of Cordelia so much that he can not accept her seemingly unflattering words. Also Lear, at the beginning, is a powerful king and his instinct for pleasure (or his id) knows no restraint. An unchecked id would lead him to destruction. The id’s concern is purely for instinctual gratification, heedless of consequence. (Guerin 157) Lear’s id could not be satisfied so he tries to find ways to satisfy himself, he punishes Cordelia and banish her. Not until Lear goes through all the sufferings does his “ego”, the rational governing agent become conscious.

In King Lear, his circumstances drive him to destruction. Just as Iago creates a circumstance for Othello to make a misjudgement, and the two elder daughters’ adulations also drive Lear toward misjudgement. His misjudgement makes him

parcels out his kingdom equally to his two elder daughters without giving his youngest daughter a thing, and even revokes his parenthood of her.

LEAR Here I disclaim all my paternal care,  
 Propinquity, and property of blood,  
 And as a stranger to my heart and me  
 Hold thee from this for ever. (Lr.1.1.111-14)

In Macbeth, there are two causes for Macbeth's misjudgements, and both are related to the problem of appearance and reality. One is, obviously, the three witches' ambiguous prophetic words. The advent of witches has been viewed as a symbol of the Devil. Furthermore, the witches represent the essence of ambiguity, ambiguous not only in their speech but in their gender: "You should be women, / And yet your beards forbid me to interpret/ That you are so" (Mac.1.3.43-45) They are generally associated with bad weather. Thunder comes with the three witches in the beginning of Act I, scene 1. Also, from the conversation of the three witches, we know that they usually appear in bad weather.

FIRST WITCH When shall we three meet again?

In thunder, lightning, or in rain?

SECOND WITCH When the hurly-burly's done,

When the battle's lost and won.

THIRD WITCH That will be ere the set of sun. (Mac.1.1.1-5)

Before the setting of the sun, everything is unclear; hence it is a suitable situation for the witches to appear. The witches after all represent ambiguity. They are neither wholly of the air nor of the earth, but rather a combination of these dark elements: "The earth hath bubbles, as the water has, / And these are of them" (Mac.1.3.77-78) From the conversation between Banquo and Macbeth, we find that they even cannot

be sure if the witches had ever appeared or not.

BANQUO Whither are they vanished?

MACBETH Into the air, and what seemed corporal

Melted as breath into the wind. Would they had stayed.

BANQUO Were such things here as we do speak about,

Or have we eaten on the insane root

That takes the reason prisoner? (Mac.1.3.78-83)

Most strikingly, the witches speak in charms, or magic riddles, and their language is dominated by what in the play is called “equivocation”: “th’ equivocation of the field, /That lies like truth” (Mac.5.5.41-42) Equivocation is closely akin to ambiguity, as well as to indecisiveness. (Garber 699) The witches’ words are always ambiguous, but Macbeth does not realize this until the end of the play. Actually, the three witches hint at this to Macbeth in the beginning of the play, they say “Fair is foul, and foul is fair.” (Mac.1.1.10) But Macbeth cannot see the truth and lets his ambition lead him to his destruction.

The other example of appearance and reality in Macbeth is the character of the protagonist, Macbeth. Macbeth is a nobleman of Scotland, and also a successful military leader. From these external appearances, Macbeth is considerably masculine. However, his desire, awakened by the witches, makes him indecisive, and also he listens to his wife’s evil advice. Lady Macbeth even taunts her husband when Macbeth can not make up his mind to commit regicide.

LADY MACBETH Was the hope drunk

Wherein you dressed yourself? Hath it slept since?

And wakes it now to look so green and pale

At what it did so freely? From this time



Such I account thy love. Art thou afeard  
 To be the same in thine own act and valour  
 As thou art in desire? Wouldst thou have that  
 Which thou esteem'st the ornament of life,  
 And live a coward in thine own esteem, (Mac.1.7.35-43)

And she encourages him to be a man:

LADY MACBETH 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. (Mac.1.7.49-51)

In Macbeth, Shakespeare explores how power and ambition can be used to destroy a person. (Morrow 23) At this point, Macbeth's free will becomes important. In Macbeth's change from an indecisive man to a cold tyrant, the circumstance plays an important role. Therefore, strictly speaking, the weird sisters and Lady Macbeth present the circumstances which drive Macbeth to destruction. According to Freud's theory, at first, Macbeth's superego makes him a responsible noble man and a successful military leader. He earns respect from the country, and even earns King Duncan's compliments. But with the appearance of the three witches, Macbeth's id, his untamed desire, begins to dominate him. We can see from the sentences below:

LADY MACBETH Thou wouldst be great,  
 Art not without ambition, but without  
 The illness should attend it; what thou wouldst highly,  
 That thou wouldst holily; wouldst not play false,  
 And yet wouldst wrongly win. (Mac.1.5.16-20)

Lady Macbeth knows Macbeth best. After reading Macbeth's letter, she can easily see through Macbeth's mind, and expresses her feelings of him as shown above.

Even Macbeth starts to suspect himself.

MACBETH This supernatural soliciting  
 Cannot be ill, cannot be good. If ill,  
 Why hath it given me earnest of success  
 Commencing in a truth? (Mac.1.3.129-32)

The witches predict that Macbeth will become Thane of Cawdor, and after seeing the three witches, Macbeth really becomes the Thane of Cawdor when he goes back to the country. Therefore, he can not help but wonder if perhaps the prophecy is true. At this point, Macbeth's id makes Macbeth thirst to be a king; however, under the social convention, he knows that regicide is such a "horrible imagining" (Mac.1.3.137)

MACBETH First, as I am his kinsman and his subject,  
 Strong both against the deed; then, as his host,  
 Who should against his murderer shut the door,  
 Not bear the knife myself. (Mac.1.7.13-16)

During the struggle, Macbeth's rational governing agent, the ego appears to make him indecisive in his act of regicide. But in the end, Macbeth is still seduced by the devil in his heart. More psychoanalytically, he is conquered by the id, his desire, to be a king. Freud once said in New Introductory Lecture on Psycho-analysis that "Libidinal excitation is aroused but not satisfied, not employed; apprehensiveness then appears instead of this libido that has been diverted from its employment." (103) Same as King Lear's situation, Macbeth is also a good example of this contention.

All the protagonists, Hamlet, Othello, King Lear and Macbeth have struggled subconsciously. Freudian theory might give us some explanation for their changing characters, but their circumstances in the four tragedies also play very important roles. If we draw a tree and imagine that Freud's psychic zones of id, ego and superego are

the three branches of the tree, then the circumstance maybe the sun which makes the tree come to life. That is, all the four tragedies have their flash point, but without their singular external and internal circumstances, the tragedies could not be developed.

