

Guiltless Ambition Essay

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What is guilt? Is it the feeling you get when you do something wrong or is it a feeling you only feel when you know what you are doing is wrong and there is nothing you can do to erase what you have done. In Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, the feeling of guilt is not something that is taken lightly. Guilt is felt by virtually every main character throughout the course of the play and is not something that is taken lightly. In [Macbeth](#), other feelings, such as ambition, overshadow guilt but when the guilt gets to be too much, unexpected actions occur that cannot be helped.

[Macbeth](#) is one of the characters in which ambition takes a higher ranking than guilt. Before [Macbeth](#) murders Duncan, he senses that something is wrong and he starts to think about the implications of his actions. As Lyman and Scott said in their essay, "Macbeth's Journey into Nothingness," "Macbeth's terrible self-discovery is that his ambitions are independent of the actions and consequences associated with achieving and maintaining his goals" (115). Macbeth realizes that if he can separate the feelings of guilt and thoughts of consequences from his actions, he is able to simultaneously be ambitious and complete his goals. Macbeth does not realize that this feat is too complicated for a human and will end up being his demise. As Macbeth is about to kill Duncan, he sees the dagger floating in the air pointing to Duncan. He is afraid of this

unnatural event and says, "It is the bloody business which informs thus to mine eyes," (II.i.55-56). Although Macbeth is so filled with guilt that he is seeing imaginary daggers floating in front of him, he still feels too empowered by the witches' prophecies to seriously stop and think about what he is doing before he does someth...

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...e liquor, which makes one 'stand to and not stand to'" (122). At first, Lady Macbeth is able to stand to, and she takes the masculine role of schemer while Macbeth executes her plots. By the end of the play, she has been reduced to a guilty woman who is unable to stand to and face what she has done. Lady Macbeth too tried to hide her guilt away unsuccessfully and it made an unaccounted for reappearance.

In Macbeth, guilt is able to conceal itself beneath many different feelings. It masks itself with ambition, fear, blood, and false confidence. Even though guilt is not always felt at the time of the crime, it soon makes a reappearance and it gets harder and harder to be masked. Eventually, it becomes too hard to ignore and the person cannot manage the feelings anymore and the guilt becomes a punishment. In the end, the guilt felt always becomes unbearable.

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