

The Concept of Tragic Heroism Across Cultures: A Comparative Analysis of Abdul Rahman Al-Sharqawi's *Hussein Revolting* and Shakespeare's *Macbeth*

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Abstract

The research takes on Hussein Revolting by Abdul Rahman Al-Sharqawi together with Macbeth by William Shakespeare to examine tragic hero development through scrutiny of how playwrights create their tragic protagonists in their cultural and historical settings. This paper studies the main characters of Imam Hussein and Macbeth through Aristotelian tragic theory by evaluating their moral battles as well as their flaws and end results. Macbeth's decline because of ambition leads him to lose his moral compass while Imam Hussein represents resistance to sacrifice through his actions. This study conducts detailed textual assessment to demonstrate the contrasting perspectives about destiny and human will as well as divine tribunals across English and Arabic tragic traditions. The research confirms Western tragedy mainly confronts individual struggles leading to downfall although Arabic tragedy follows a path of communal moral growth which transcends personal boundaries. This study promotes through its comparison of universal and culture-specific aspects of heroism.

Keywords: Tragic hero, Comparative literature, Arabic tragedy, Shakespearean drama , Fate and free will, Moral struggle, Cultural perspectives on tragedy.

مفهوم البطولة التراجيدية عبر الثقافات: تحليل مقارن بين مسرحية "الحسين الثائر" لعبد الرحمن

الشرقاوي ومسرحية "ماكبت" لشكسبير

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الملخص:

يتناول البحث مسرحية "ثورة الامام الحسين" لعبد الرحمن الشرقاوي، ومسرحية "ماكبت" لويليام شكسبير، لدراسة نشوء البطل التراجيدي من خلال التدقيق في كيفية ابداع كُتّاب المسرحيات لأبطالهم التراجيديين في بيئاتهم الثقافية والتاريخية. هذا البحث يتناول الشخصيات الرئيسية للإمام الحسين وماكبث عن طريق نظرية التراجيديا الأرسطية، من خلال تقييم معاركهم الأخلاقية، بالإضافة إلى العيوب والنتائج النهائية. تراجع ماكبت بسبب الطموح الذي قاد الى إلى فقدان بوصلته الأخلاقية، بينما يمثل الإمام الحسين المقاومة للتضحية من خلال أفعاله. تُجري هذه الدراسة تقييمًا نصيًا مفصلاً لإظهار وجهات النظر المتناقضة حول القدر والانسان ، بالإضافة إلى المحاكم الإلهية العادلة في التقاليد التراجيدية الإنجليزية والعربية. يؤكد البحث أن التراجيديا الغربية تواجه صراعات فردية بشكل رئيسي التي تؤدي إلى السقوط، بينما تتبع التراجيديا العربية مسارًا من النمو الأخلاقي الجماعي الذي يتجاوز الحدود الشخصية. تتعزز هذه الدراسة من خلال مقارنتها بين الجوانب العالمية والثقافية للبطولة.

الكلمات المفتاحية : البطل التراجيدي، الادب المقارن، التراجيديا العربية، الدراما الشكسبيرية، القدر و حرية الارادة، النضال الاخلاقي، وجهات النظر الثقافية عن التراجيديا

1. Introduction

1.1. Background on the Topic

Through different societies drama has maintained tragedy as its main literary genre to understand how people live together with ethical standards. The typical main character within tragic stories must fight between their own actions and fate before succumbing to destruction. Western readers use *Aristotle's definition of hamartia* to understand heroes' fatal weaknesses in *William Shakespeare's plays*. Through Arabic literature tragedy emerges in connection between religion and morality.

The work of *William Shakespeare* and *Abdul Rahman Al-Sharqawi* contains the tragic heroic figures who best exemplify their craft. Macbeth leads a Shakespearean tragedy, and Hussein Revolting depicts Imam Hussein neatly. Macbeth died

because he lost control of his ambition while Imam Hussein suffered because he honored justice and gave up everything. Put together both Macbeth and Imam Hussein create an intellectual setting for us to analyze how tradition impacts tragic hero development (1).

1.2. Significance of the Study

Comparative literature aims at encouraging readers to gain deeper understanding of literatures of different nations as well as to discover similarities in differences. Thus, the paper aims to contribute to the discussion of cross-cultural portrayal of the concept of tragic heroism by comparing Hussein Revolting and Macbeth. Although there is a vast body of scholarship on Shakespearean plays and the portrayal of tragedy through the Western contexts, there is not much done on the Arab tragic narratives (2). This study is significant for several reasons:

1. **Cultural Comparison/Cultural Analysis:** It demonstrates the distinct features between the Islamic and the Western tragedy in respect to fate, freedom and the hero.
2. **Ethics:** It discusses how the tragic hero tackles ethical issues and the struggle between the right and wrong.
3. **Education Contribution:** It draws from literature, philosophy and theology to construct a laudable analysis that is inter-disciplinary in nature (3).

Thus, promoting an exchange of ideas from the Eastern and the Western traditions, this research improves the quality of cross-cultural analysis of tragic literature and contributes to deeper reflection upon a hero's significance for the development of ethical and epistemological knowledge.

1.3. Research Questions and Thesis Statement

The research questions that addresses this study include the following:

- a. How does Hussein Revolting and Macbeth define the tragedy hero in his or her societal and historical realities?
- b. The play features two characters whose tragic fates are determined by factors that can be attributed to either fate or free will: Macbeth and Imam Hussein.
- c. How are the ethical and moral issues presented to the two characters related to the societies in which they belong to?

The author of the article under analysis argues that though Macbeth and Imam Hussein active their tragic heroism the plots of the plays and books differ notably for cultural reasons, religion, and philosophy. Macbeth's main motivating factor is ambition and inner turmoil while Imam Hussein, on the other hand, is a figure of sacrifice and resistance by K. Al-Sharqawi (4).

1.4. Brief Overview of the Article Structure

Therefore, in structure of this article is the following:

- a. **Section 2:** Literature Review – The Literature Review section discusses the literatures on tragic heroism whereby the article explores the Aristotelian principles and tragic narrative, Western tragic narratives, and Arabic tragic literature. Some of the important works to be expounded are the Macbeth and Hussein Revolting (5).
- b. **Section 3:** Theoretical Framework – This part describes how Aristotelian tragedy, postcolonial literature and Islamic literary aesthetics would be employed to analyse the two texts.
- c. **Section 4:** Comparative Analysis – This section compares and contrasts the tragedy of Macbeth and Imam Hussein and discusses reasons behind their fall, ethically complex situations and overall story progression.
- d. **Section 5:** Conclusion – This section restates the main arguments drawn in light of the analysis of the study and the implications that have been considered; the last part of this section provides an outlook to future research perspectives.

In this way, conducting this sort of analysis, the study aims at discussing and explaining cultural aspects of tragic heroism in the book, and thus, opening a new piece of evidence on how the literature intervenes in the collective perception of the world, defining its moral and other dimensions (6).

2. Literature Review

2.1. Tragic Heroism: Aristotelian Principles and Narrative

In fact, it's difficult to determine the tragic heroism in the literature of the western world without referring to Aristotle's work, Poetics. For Aristotle, a tragic hero should have hamartia (error), peripeteia (the main turning point), and anagnorisis (recognition instance) that contributes to the tragic hero's destruction (2). This model has portrayed itself in such disasters as the Shakespeare Macbeth. Indeed, Macbeth can be described as an Aristotelian tragic hero – the tragic phase of the protagonist is the transfer from the status of a courageous and successful warrior to the cruel and paranoid tyrant (4).

Unlike the European tragic genre, Arabic tragic literature brings into play moral and religious roles as reflected in Al-Sharqawi's Hussein Revolting. Hussein is a victims of fate never of choice, his martyrdom is that of a holy man rather than a sinner. However, unlike Macbeth, Hussein was not the tragic hero whose fallacy brought about his downfall since he stuck to the side of righteousness to his ultimate death (4).

2.2. Western Tragic Narratives

Epic works of literature that depict a tragic hero who has the characteristic features placed in Aristotle's tragic hero are Hamlet, Othello, and King Lear. But in comparative literature, it has not been the focus of how these western concepts relate with the non-western tragic paradigm. For example, Bloom in his book *Shakespearian Tragedy* sees the tragedies as part of the renaissance humanism where the emphasis is not on a group or spiritual disaster but on an individual one (6).

2.3. Arabic Tragic Literature

Arabic literature has incorporated tragedy since ancient times although it follows a different pattern than Western drama because it focuses on collective hardships which also display resistance against oppression. According to Islamic literature as well as historical records Imam Hussein's narrative exemplifies opposition to tyranny, above being a mere tale of personal misfortune. Scientific literature regarding tragic heroism primarily applies Aristotelian and Shakespearean models but there is limited research which illustrates how Islamic perspectives transform this literary concept (6).

2.4. Identification of Research Gaps

Research into Macbeth as a Western tragic hero exists widely yet scholars have conducted minimal investigations regarding the comparison between Shakespearean tragedy and Arabic tragic traditions. The existing studies on comparative literature pay more attention to Greek European sources while ignoring the influence of Islamic and Arabic literary traditions (7). Academic discussions about how moral and religious elements affect the tragic hero concept in Arabic literature remain minimal.

2.5. Contribution to the Field

Thus, this article in the sphere of comparative literature is important for the following reasons:

- a. Presenting a Comparison of Macbeth and Hussein Revolting As Tragic Heroes.
- b. Translating the meaning of the Nov; Putting together Western and Arabic literary conventions; The moral, religious, philosophical outlook on the tragic hero.
- c. Extending the analysis of certain Islamic play and offering a non-Western take on the tragedy hero beyond Aristotle's understanding of it.

As a result, this study aims at filling the above outlined gaps with a view of contributing to the knowledge of tragic heroism as a cross-cultural but contextual concept prevalent in literature.

3. Theoretical Framework

In evaluating the concept of tragic heroism in Macbeth and Hussein Revolting, this study uses Aristotelian theory of tragedy, postcolonialism and Islamicate Aesthetics. These frameworks also enable viewers to understand equally the anticipative cultural constructions of tragic heroism in the West and Arabic World but in addition to compare and contrast how the tragic hero is constructed culturally.

3.1. Aristotelian Tragedy

Aristotle in his Poetics provides readers with a systematic approach to what can defines a tragic hero. This is why Aristotle's specifications as essential to qualify for a tragic hero are noble birth, a hamartia that is a character flaw that ultimately dooms the hero. This leads to the occurrence of peripeteia – reversal of fortune, then anagnorisis – recognition, in which the hero gains insight about the events that are to take place (8). Analyzing the Macbeth tale in Shakespeare's play, it is quite possible to conclude that the protagonist fits the description of the Aristotelian tragic hero. His ambition together with his failure in deciding what is right and wrong act like a motorists that cause his fall. His peripeteia arises, for instance, when he finds himself in a tragic mistake of assessing the crown he so yearned for as a curse that kills king When he reaches the end of the play and refuses to change his actions, he undergoes his anagnorisis.

Nevertheless, there is no doubt that Macbeth can be easily introduced to Aristotle's model – at the same time, Hussein Revolting presents the audience with a tragedy which differs from the model. The death of Imam Hussein is a saintly act of struggle different from the moral vice that a tragic hero possesses in the Aristotelian noble sense. Far from the fatal flaw which led to his end, Hussein is

depicted as a man who put too much value in justice and truth to his downfall and thus his fate was one of defiance against tyranny. Such is the case with Hussein Revolting as it depicts a different kind of a tragedy, one written in themes of unite, fight, and die for a cause that will accept nothing less than the spiritual embrace of martyrdom (9).

3.2. Postcolonial Literary Criticism

Postcolonial literary analysis contributes distinct interpretive elements that reveal how former colonial forces and their power systems affect literature which portrays resistance along with identity development. The tragic story of Imam Hussein in Arabic literature adopts new meanings in Hussein Revolting which depicts his death as a symbol fighting against tyranny. According to postcolonial critics Hussein's self-sacrificing embrace of peril represents stands as a representative display of resistance which connects his death to numerous freedom and justice movements in postcolonial communities (10).

Hussein Revolting provides particular insight through this framework because it represents more than historical accounts of the martyrdom of Hussein; it delivers the message of opposing authoritarian rule in power. The story of Hussein symbolically represents the hardships which colonized populations along with oppressed minorities experience. Hussein's act of defying an oppressive state system speaks strongly about the postcolonial ideals involving independence and opposition against an authority. As a result Macbeth's tale exists without this broad social framework. Hussein's sacrifice rises above individual identity to become an inclusive universal action that creates unity between people. Through a postcolonial analysis tragic heroism in Arabic literature accepts new dimensions because it interprets these characters regarding political and social conflict (11).

3.3. Islamic Literary Aesthetics

The third analytical framework in this analysis draws from Islamic literary aesthetics that highlights divine justice as well as sacrifice alongside communal ethics. The Western tragic model explores personal flaws as the primary source of tragedy but Islamic aesthetics view tragedy through moral and spiritual righteousness criteria. Imam Hussein merits admiration through his noble acts of moral strength combined with purposeful self-sacrifice during his fight to defend justice and truth against oppressors. Islamic literary traditions consider such martyrdom acts to be exemplary and redemptive rather than tragic within the traditional understanding. According to the Islamic perspective Hussein's death

emerged through divine providence after which his tragic fate accomplished spiritual triumphs by overcoming tyranny together with injustice (12).

Islamic aesthetics understand how ethical obligations create essential components for heroic journeys through communities. The loss of Hussein affects everyone within his Muslim community because his sacrifice serves as a foundation for complete moral integrity among believers. In Islamic tragedy the main focus shifts away from how the hero fails to their moral and spiritual progress toward a higher state. The downfall of Macbeth originates from his individual ambitions together with moral wrongdoing and psychological distress. Within the tragic hero framework the texts examine opposite approaches since one presents dominant individual moral decline versus the other shows spiritual virtue and community-based sacrifice.

Altogether, it is with the help of the Aristotelian conception of tragedy, the principles of postcolonial study of literature, and the principles of Islamic esthetics it is possible to explain how the reflections of the tragic hero in the Western and Arabic literature are different. While Shakespeare's Macbeth is very Aristotelian which makes the protagonist go through internal turmoil and fatal character flaws, Hussein Revolting gives a classic example of a theater piece that reveals sacrifice and moral stand as tragic flaws. The comparative approach makes it possible for one to have a better understanding on the cultural, philosophical, and religious factors, which define the essence of tragic heroism in these two works.

4. Comparative Analysis

A comparison between the Macbeth and Imam Hussein is a fitting point of discussion to uncover how tragedy and heroism are represented in two different cultures and literary genres. Nevertheless, The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark and Musthafa the Forger both provide existing knowledge into ethical issues, ethical conflicts, and the concept of self-sacrifice despite the fact that Hamlet is derived from Western Renaissance drama and Musthafa originates from Islamic history.

Having discussed Macbeth and identified the Aristotelian concepts, one can now see that the primary flaw that defines Macbeth as a tragic hero is the excess of ambition. The first of these flaws includes taking an immoral act of killing Macbeth's friend, King Duncan on the premise of attaining the kingship for himself. It propels him to fall into the abyss of evil, and with the unfathomable yearning of a tyrant, he turns into a tyrant himself; this is the tragic flaw which is at

the center of Aristotle's paradigm as seen in the play. Firstly it is preferable to discuss the ethical aspect of Macbeth and it is in fact the inner turmoil within Macbeth that is THE ethical question for him, namely he wants power but the power he achieves he illegitimately gets from the murder of Duncan. It is therefore not that he is evil or that he has some sinister intent, but the fact that he is unable to find the answers he seeks within his own soul. The demise of the protagonist ensues when he cannot triumph over even his personal ethics and, therefore, dies (13).

The story of Imam Hussein in Hussein Revolting shows a protagonist who sacrifices himself because of his devotion to a noble mission yet it does not represent a moral downfall. Hussein chose revolt against Yazid's tyranny because justice demanded it while he refused to give in to any form of oppression. Hussein faced tragedy due to his firm commitment to fight for right principles instead of succumbing to his internal moral deficiencies. Through his refusal to surrender his beliefs before execution Hussein earns status as a symbolic figure of defiance instead of a tragic personality with a fatal flaw (14). Hussein faces an ethical dilemma when his commitment to survive meets the obligation to defend justice and he chooses this path leading to his martyrdom. The spiritual triumph of his death shows his sacrifice as a divine intervention and anti-tyranny movement which transcends his personal failures.

The two stories present their heroes as they navigate complex moral situations. Macbeth follows a path depicting inner turmoil prompted by his ambition which leads to feelings of guilt while Hussein faces external opposition between unjust rule and moral justice. Through its narrative arc Macbeth moves from individual dominance followed by complete breakdown which causes his guilt to overwhelm him. Through his unwavering dedication to principles of justice Imam Hussein moved from life to a victorious death as a martyr.

Macbeth's ethical breakdown manifests due to his personal moral destruction while Imam Hussein finds his demise as he stands as a symbol of righteous resistance for the collective good. The differences between Western and Arabic literary traditions explain how tragic heroes get depicted.

Conclusion

Hence, the present research was conducted with the aim of comparing and contrasting Macbeth and Imam Hussein with reference to the concept of tragic heroism by showing the ethical dilemmas and cultural factors that contributed to the transformation of the main characters. Analyzing both tragedies through the lens of the Aristotelian tragic viewing, post-colonial literature, and the Islamic

literary ornament, we understand that both tragedies depict different cultural and rigorous standards and moral coordinates yet continue moving around decisively human issues about sacrifice for justice and fight against tyrant.

Thus, in the overall structure of the play Macbeth, the tragedy is best comprehended as an internal conflict based on the motives of ambition, guilt and moral degeneration. Macbeth's tragedy stems from the thirst for power as a result of which his character makes a series of actions that result in his doom. The play shows the disastrous consequences of uncontrolled greed, egocentricity and struggle between the human soul and spirit. On the other hand, in the tragedy of Imam Hussein the essence of the tragedy is the loss of him and his family for the greater good of justice. Uniquely, rather than personal greed and wickedness, Hussein's policies stem not from personal greed or wickedness but from the wish to fight tyranny. Sandy's catastrophe is that of spiritual martyrdom, thereby signifying heroism as self sacrifice in order to uphold a moral principle.

This comparison of two tragedies shows how the Antigone and Western civilization and the Islamic tradition see tragedy not only in the- individual's sins but in societal prism where the main values are moral and religious obligations. Comparing the two main characters – Macbeth and Imam Hussein, it is possible to identify some significant cultural differences borne in mind that whereas individual spiritual unrest and internal redemption are definitely a priority of the Western tragedy, collective sacrifice for the sake of the community is a primary concern of such a tragedy as Hussein. For further studies, more works should be focused on the analysis of cross-cultural tragedies in order to widen the knowledge about how different cultures create the concept of hero and heroic death. However, a comparative analysis of postcolonial cultures' interpretation of tragic heroism may shed new light on how current concerns of oppression and subversion are depicted in literature. What is more, the works of literature that depict gender and identity issues might be considered for future research since the interpretations cross-cultural approach were not explored exhaustively.

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