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Echoes of Guilt: A Comparative Study of *Macbeth* and *Crime and Punishment*"

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Abstract

This dissertation examines how conscience, guilt, and moral conflict are portrayed across time through a comparative study of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment,* and selected modern narratives. It explores how internal collapse unfolds in different historical and psychological contexts. The first chapter analyzes the moral frameworks shaping Macbeth and Raskolnikov ranging from divine order and political authority to existential crisis and nihilism. The second chapter examines their psychological decline using existential and psychoanalytic ideas, demonstrating how inner destruction is caused by guilt and identity fragmentation. The last chapter takes the conversation into the digital era by examining how modern media, such as *Fleabag*, *BoJack Horseman*, and online confession culture, change conscience. Despite irony and self-performance, guilt remains central. The study concludes that while the form of conscience changes, its presence remains a constant force in literature and human experience.

Keywords: Conscience, guilt, moral conflict, psychoanalysis, *Macbeth*, *Crime and Punishment,* digital age, redemption.

Dedication

To the enduring memory of my dear friend Berkouki El Bahi, whose wisdom and passion inspired me to pursue this topic. Though you left us too soon, your spirit guided every page of this work. To my family, my brother and sisters, for your endless support, and to my mother, whose strength remains my compass even in her absence. To my friends Badro, Walid, Yasmine, Anais and Leaticia, your encouragement was my anchor. This dissertation is a testament to the light you all bring into my life.

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General Introduction

Literature has always been more than a way to entertain. It slows us down, makes us look inward, and gently or sometimes forcefully holds up a mirror to the parts of ourselves we tend to ignore. It draws our attention to quiet, uncomfortable questions: What kind of person am I? What am I capable of doing? What do I do when no one is watching? Across centuries and cultures, one of the most enduring themes literature explores is the weight of conscience, the soft but persistent voice inside that refuses to stay silent after we've crossed a moral line. Whether it speaks through guilt, shame, regret, or doubt, it's a voice that has shaped countless characters, and just as often, shaped the readers watching them fall apart or struggle to put themselves back together.

This dissertation begins with two such characters, two deeply human portraits of moral collapse. On the surface, Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* could not be more different. One is set in a world of witches, castles, and kings; the other in the bleak streets of 19th-century Saint Petersburg. And yet, beneath the surface, both stories revolve around the same profound question: what happens to a person after they do something they cannot undo?

In *Macbeth*, we meet a man who begins with honor and promise, only to be consumed by ambition. What starts as a desire for power quickly becomes a descent into paranoia, madness, and deep, relentless guilt. As he moves further away from who he used to be, he loses sight of everything, his values, his peace of mind, even his own reflection. Raskolnikov, the troubled student in *Crime and Punishment*, follows a different path but meets the same fate. Driven by poverty, pride, and a dangerous idea, he convinces himself that he is above morality that some people can do terrible things for the greater good. But after the crime, guilt

clings to him. It seeps into his body, his dreams, his thoughts. He tries to reason with it, to bury it under logic and theory, but it keeps rising to the surface.

In both stories, it isn't a courtroom or battlefield that punishes these men it's their own minds. It's the voice inside that won't go away, the one that keeps asking, "Who are you now?" This dissertation explores how Shakespeare and Dostoevsky bring that inner voice to life how they show us what happens when a person tries to outrun their conscience and fails. But the purpose of this study isn't only to examine how guilt unfolds in these two texts. It's to ask a deeper question: what do these stories tell us about ourselves? Are Macbeth and Raskolnikov just tragic characters from the past, or do they still speak to something we recognize in our own time? After all, people today still wrestle with guilt, still try to justify their actions, still carry the weight of choices they can't take back. The language has changed, the context has changed but the inner conflict remains.

In our current world, the ways we express conscience have shifted. We see public apologies go viral, trauma shared in TikTok confessionals, and remorse packaged into carefully worded posts. Sometimes it's sincere; sometimes it's a performance. We live in a culture where self-awareness is often public, where guilt can be a spectacle, and forgiveness can feel like a transaction. And yet, beneath all of that, the old questions still whisper through: What have I done? Can I be forgiven? Can I forgive myself?

That's why this dissertation doesn't stop with Shakespeare and Dostoevsky. The third chapter turns to the present, to explore how the burden of conscience continues to unfold in contemporary storytelling. From the animated tragedy of *BoJack Horseman* to the fourth-wall-breaking vulnerability of *Fleabag*, we see new characters grappling with the same old weight. The form may be different, faster, funnier, more fragmented but the heart of the struggle remains. These modern stories show us that even in a world full of distractions and

irony, we still crave redemption. We still long to be seen, to be forgiven, to start again.

To better understand the psychology behind this timeless conflict, this study draws on both psychoanalytic and existential thought. Freud's theories on guilt, repression, and the superego help explain why people suffer deeply even when their secrets stay hidden. Sometimes, we don't need anyone else to judge us, we do it ourselves, over and over again. That judgment isn't always loud. Often, it's quiet, lingering, showing up when we least expect it. At the same time, thinkers like Nietzsche and Kierkegaard help us understand the freedom and fear that come with making choices in a world without clear answers. They remind us that with freedom comes responsibility, and with responsibility, guilt. Their ideas don't sit outside the texts, they are written into the very fabric of the characters' experiences. We see them unravel not just through plot, but through the tension between what they do and what they can live with.

This dissertation is structured around that unfolding. Chapter One lays the groundwork by exploring the historical and philosophical contexts that shaped both *Macbeth* and *Crime and Punishment*. Understanding the moral universe each author was writing in the fears, beliefs, and social forces of their time helps us see why these stories are told the way they are. In Shakespeare's world, conscience is tied to divine order and cosmic justice. In Dostoevsky's, it becomes more inward, more existential haunted by a God that may or may not be listening.

Chapter Two turns more closely to the characters themselves, tracing their psychological unraveling. Using Freud's understanding of guilt and the unconscious, alongside existential questions of freedom, identity, and responsibility, this chapter explores how Macbeth and Raskolnikov each try to make sense of their actions and why, in the end, they can't. Their downfall isn't only about external consequences. It's about what happens when someone loses

the ability to recognize their own reflection, when the self turns inward and begins to fall apart.

Chapter Three brings the conversation into the 21st century, asking how the burden of conscience appears in our digital, often ironic age. Here, the study looks at modern narratives that blend humor with heartbreak, like *BoJack Horseman*, where a washed-up celebrity keeps sabotaging himself in the hope of feeling something real. It also considers the rise of digital confession culture, where private guilt becomes public performance. Even when guilt is masked by memes or wrapped in sarcasm, the question still lingers beneath it: Is there any way back from this?

Across all three chapters, one truth remains: conscience doesn't vanish. It changes form. It adapts to its time, its language, its platform. But it still finds a way to ask the same questions, to interrupt our stories with a kind of moral pause. Whether whispered in a soliloquy, shouted in a fevered monologue, or confessed into a screen, conscience holds us accountable not only for what we've done, but for who we are becoming.

This dissertation is not just an analysis of guilt in literature. It's an exploration of what literature helps us face in ourselves. Through *Macbeth*, *Crime and Punishment*, and modern stories shaped by irony and self-awareness, we return again and again to a central truth: we are not just what we do we are what we carry. And in that carrying, literature helps us ask the questions we're often too afraid to speak out loud.

Chapter One

Literary and Historical Context

1. literature review:

1. introduction:

Although there is a vast literature on Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* and Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, the search on guilt, conscience, and psychological decay in both works provides a rich field for scholarly investigation. The protagonists' moral and existential crises have long captivated academics, but there are still few comparative studies that specifically look at conscience from both a philosophical and psychoanalytic perspective.

Much of the critical analysis of *Macbeth* emphasizes the protagonist's psychological unraveling and his moral descent as a reflection of Elizabethan beliefs in divine order and retributive justice. As Cedric Watts notes, Shakespeare "dramatizes guilt as a corrosive force that contaminates every sphere of life, political, spiritual, and psychological" (Watts 18). From a Freudian perspective, Macbeth's hallucinations and compulsive obsessions are sometimes seen as the expression of repressed guilt. The way Macbeth distributes blame and displaces dread while yet being plagued by internal pain is made clearer by Anna Freud's idea of defense mechanisms, specifically repression and projection (Freud 42).

In parallel, *Crime and Punishment* has received substantial attention for its philosophical and psychological complexity. Gary Saul Morson argues that Dostoevsky "was not merely a novelist of ideas but of consequences," focusing on how abstract ethical theories manifest in emotional and existential suffering (Morson). Raskolnikov's justification for murder his belief in the "extraordinary man" has been studied in relation to Nietzsche's Übermensch and Russian nihilism. Yet scholars like Nisha and Tyagi insist that Raskolnikov's true punishment is "not the law but the moral self," noting that Dostoevsky's narrative is an existential map of "internal damnation" (Nisha and Tyagi 1046).

From a psychoanalytic perspective, Freud's theory of the superego is especially applicable to both texts. The superego, as Freud writes, "torments the sinful ego with the same feeling of anxiety and is on the watch for opportunities of getting it punished by the external world" (Civilization and Its Discontents 84). Macbeth's fear of damnation and Raskolnikov's feverish confessions can both be seen as instances where the superego asserts moral authority, regardless of rational justification or external validation.

Few academics juxtapose Shakespeare and Dostoevsky to examine how each develops conscience as a force that transcends circumstance, despite these rich traditions of individual study. The current study fills this vacuum by utilizing interdisciplinary methodologies that combine literary criticism, psychology, and philosophy. For instance, academics like Alberto Giubilini have questioned the very stability of conscience, suggesting that "conscience" Modern readers face a conundrum as Dostoevsky's spiritual absolutism and Shakespeare's belief in cosmic order contrast sharply with this relativist viewpoint.

Furthermore, feminist interpretations have broadened the discourse on conscience and guilt by emphasizing the ways in which gender impedes moral authority. Lady Macbeth's "unsex me here" (1.5.41) defiance of conventional femininity in *Macbeth* has been read as a subversive assertion of authority and accountability. As Grobas Barciela later notes, guilt can transform over time from a rational emotion into a persecutory one, especially when unresolved or suppressed (Barciela 26). This dynamic is equally evident in *Crime and Punishment,* where Sonya's quiet endurance and religious conviction become moral counterpoints to Raskolnikov's nihilism.

In conclusion, the literature now in publication thoroughly examines the moral psychology of each work, but it hardly ever puts them in conversation. This study attempts to close a gap in the literature by examining the dual roles of shame as a destructive and

redemptive force. It does this while acknowledging the universality of conscience and honoring the unique moral ecosystems of 19th-century Russia and Renaissance England.

1. introduction to *macbeth*:

When Shakespeare wrote *Macbeth*, England was under the rule of King James I since 1606. Shakespeare's play reflects the era's fascination with witchcraft and believed to be inspired by King James *Daemonologie*, a treatise arguing that witches were real as well as dangerous. Witches were feared in the past, due to the belief that they possessed the ability to manipulate the weather, blight crops, or inflict harm on people. To attract as well as impress the king, Shakespeare cleverly employed the witches in *Macbeth* to deliver a frightening story, not because he strongly believed in witchcraft.

The theory that Shakespeare didn't believe in witches rises as many people at that time questioned whether witchcraft was real or just superstition by 1606. Thinkers like Reginald Scot, Thomas Ady and a few others wrote books, like *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*, explaining why people believed in the existence of witches. Through his book, Scot argues that many accused witches were misunderstood or wrongly blamed for unavoidable tragedies. Shakespeare's reservations give *Macbeth*'s witches engaging depth.

Though the witches are displayed as unnerving and strange, they are not the source of evil in *Macbeth*. While they do rein some Macbeth's ideas, they do not force him to do anything. It is Macbeth who must interpret and respond to their ambiguous and complex prophecies. This makes the reader question whether Macbeth is the "villain" or whether the witches are to blame for what happens.

Lady Macbeth is another key character in the play. She is the paragon of shrewd

ambition and machination in the drama. When the witches present Macbeth with the idea of kingship, he returns to Lady Macbeth to share the prophecy to coerce him into murder all while all what the three witches did was inform him. His wife rebukes him for his inability to be a man and complete the deed. Throughout the play's events, She is the one who persuades him to kill King Duncan despite his reluctance. By depicting Lady Macbeth's wickedness as being relatable, Shakespeare interprets the human suffering as being born of desperation and deprivation, not magic, and this can be seen through Lady Macbeth who seems to be scarier than the witches in many aspects.

The play transmits Shakespeare interest in a world that is far from witches and prophecies. He peeps underneath the surface of everyone's mind, the anxieties one can experience. He explores the human dearest desires and how far they can be transformed into realities. The play expresses the fact that it is more frightening to watch Macbeth and Lady Macbeth annihilate one another and everyone else through guilt, hunger drive, and ambition than what witches and witchcraft can do. In some ways, Shakespeare's world resembles our own. The characters in the play spar with their beliefs around the paranormal, shaking established myths, scrutinizing nouns such as morality and accountability. That's all brought into focus in *Macbeth*, which takes the story further than a murder mystery and witches into an eternal investigation of what it is to be human.

a. The Play's Political Background

Shakespeare's *Macbeth* was written just one year after the infamous Gunpowder Plot of 1605, in which Guy Fawkes and other Catholic conspirators attempted to blow up the Houses of Parliament in order to assassinate King James I. England was rocked by this spectacular and horrific incident, which served as a stark reminder of the perils of insurrection and treachery. The political atmosphere at that time was one of increased awareness of challenges to the monarchy and paranoia. Shakespeare, who was always aware of the attitude of the court and his audience, mirrored similar fears in *Macbeth*. The play's themes were also greatly influenced by the change of power from Queen Elizabeth I to King James I. Elizabeth passed away in 1603, leaving no successor. (He was already King of Scotland, and he inherited the throne after Elizabeth's death in 1603 without leaving an heir behind.).

The transition from one king to the next raised questions of legitimacy, loyalty and security of kings even if the handover went reasonably well. Shakespeare considers these issues in *Macbeth* through his exploration of a theme where the usurpation of a throne by treachery results with chaos. The murder of King Duncan to seize the throne by Macbeth is not only an act of egoistic ambition but also directly challenges the idea that kings have a divine right to govern since they were selected by God. Shakespeare unveils a message for anyone who is contemplating to usurp the king, Macbeth. At the drama's core lies a straightforward warning: unchecked ambition brings ruination, and any act of treachery against a sovereign will incur the wrath of God. Macbeth's rise to power is temporary and his eventual fall is perverse as well as necessary. This illustrates the notion that anyone attempting to illegally take the throne will suffer terrible repercussions from both God and earthly forces. Macbeth's own persona serves as a warning illustration. He is a devoted

and well-known warrior at the beginning of the play, respected for his valor and devotion to the king. He turns into a dictator and loses everything, including his honor, his allies, his wife, and eventually his life, once he lets his passion override his moral compass.

Shakespeare illustrates via Macbeth's tragic narrative that ambition will ultimately lead to disaster if it is followed without consideration for justice or loyalty. This warning would have struck a chord with Shakespeare's audience, especially in the wake of the Gunpowder Plot, as the plot's conspirators were motivated by a combination of ambition and ideological fervor, and their failure and subsequent execution were interpreted as proof of divine punishment for their treachery, mirroring Macbeth's fate in the play. By connecting themes of ambition, treason, and divine justice, Shakespeare not only amused his audience but also emphasized the value of loyalty to the monarchy.

b. The great chain of being:

The Great Chain of Being is one of the most important philosophical and theological theories of the Renaissance that explains the order and hierarchy of all creation.   It   strongly influenced the themes and conflicts of *Macbeth*. This idea came from the belief that a holy, divinely ordained hierarchy rules the world. This theory emphasizes that everything in the universe had a fixed place; it was ordered, and that order was a kind of cosmic hierarchy.

The idea behind the chain of being is that God is the highest being and reigns at the top of the universe as a source of perfection, eternality and existence. The king, in this context, is considered as the highest-ranking human and earthly representative of divine power. He is said to divinely appointed to serve as God's "viceroy" and rules by divine fiat. Moreover, the nobility and the common people in this chain are followed by animals, plants, and then the inanimate objects. An "upset," that is, a violation of this hierarchy, was thought to cause anarchy and a divine chaos. The Great Chain of Being was a kind of "Moral Tale". Which warned against ambition and disobedience.

The consequences of breaking the Great Chain of Being are shown in *Macbeth* with eloquence. The play opens with the introduction of King Duncan as Scotland's legitimate, divinely ordained monarch who rules over the country with justice, wisdom, and authority, and portrays the natural order of the world. But when Duncan is murdered by Macbeth, a nobleman from another class who clearly lacks the ruling required qualities usurps the throne and brings disorder and chaos into Scotland, the natural realm, and himself.

Along the play, unusual and ominous happenings in nature embody this disruption and disorder. The murder of Duncan sends such shocking events through the natural world that several creatures have apparently been stirred up to act against their natural inclinations. Apparently, the mighty falcons who rule the skies have been reduced to the status of being the prey of a number of revenge-happy owls.

c. Feminism:

When Shakespeare penned the play, England was going through a huge change. Queen Elizabeth I, one of its most iconic rulers, had just passed away, she had been ruling for almost 50 years, leading the country with strength, intelligence, and independence. Her death did not only mark the end of her reign but also the end of a long period of female leadership which was a bigger matter. King James I, the successor was a Scotsman and the first male ruler in England in nearly half a century. The change from a strong female queen to a male king was a marking historical event, both politically and socially which has influenced how people viewed power, gender, and authority.

In this context, *Macbeth* is a fascinating play because, even though it is named after a man, the women in the story appear to be more powerful than the male figures. Shakespeare wasn't only writing a story about a man's tragedy but also focusing on how women influence and challenge the traditional ideas of power and leadership. Lady Macbeth is not a typical

woman like other women of the Renaissance period. Unlike them, known for being passive and nurturing, she is ambitious, determined and even ruthless. When she hears about witches' speculations about Macbeth becoming a king, she immediately starts plotting how to make it happens. She manipulates her husband, questions his courage, and convinces him by force and pressure to murder King Duncan to usurp the throne. Her famous line, "unsex me here," refers to how she rejects the traditional expectations of femininity and how she wants the strength and resolve that society associates with men. She is described as the main force behind her husband's actions on a daily basis, which proves how much power she holds in her hands, as well as her importance not only in their relationship but also in Macbeth's character.

Furthermore, the three witches, or the "weird sisters," are another example of women being in power. Instead of being motherly and nurturing they are displayed as mysterious and manipulative. Their prophecies plant ambition in Macbeth's mind and change the body of the entire play. But what's interesting is that they never actually tell Macbeth what to do. They symbolize a kind of power that is difficult to overcome. Their presences raises important questions about fate, free will, and the nature of evil and whether they are controlling Macbeth's fate, or merely predict it? Are they the original source of Macbeth's tyrannical actions, or he is simply fulfilling what is already destined to him.

What makes this dynamic even more compelling is how the male characters of the play react to these powerful women characters. Macbeth, with all his strength as a warrior, he is easily influenced by Lady Macbeth and the witches. He hesitates, doubts himself, and needs constant reassurance, whether from his wife or the witches. Even King Duncan, who is a noble and fair ruler, he is shown as overly trusting, the fact that leads to his downfall.

In a time when society was transitioning from Elizabeth's strong female rule to

James' male led monarchy, Shakespeare seems to be describing these gender dynamics. Women characters in Macbeth do not fit the traditional mold of the time. They are not quiet or submissive, but take charge, manipulate, and hold a huge amount of influence over men around them instead.

Through presenting the female characters as powerful and leading individuals, it is crucial to say that Shakespeare was doing something important for his time. The play is not a simple story about ambition and betrayal, but a tool to point out deeper matters. What happens when women break from their traditional roles? How does power work when it's not tied to physical strength or political title? And what are the consequences when ambition whether male or female goes unchecked?

3. introduction to *Crime and Punishment:*

One of the first great psychological novels in world literature, *Crime and Punishment* (1866), is considered a classic of Russian realism. Dostoevsky's particular brand of realism "emphasizes the internal, psychological realities of his characters" over external description. According to this tradition, the book delves deeply into Raskolnikov's thoughts and moral quandaries: he "inflicts and experiences a great deal of suffering" because he believes he is "better than the average man." Along with other notable works from the 1860s, like Turgenev's Fathers and Sons and Tolstoy's War and Peace, the novel was serialized in the prestigious literary journal Russkii Vestnik (The Russian Messenger) and reflects a realist concern with society and character. Strand of Realism and Psychology: Dostoevsky's novel represents "one strand of a realist tradition running throughout the 1860s" in Russia. Unlike purely social problem fiction, it turns inward: action on the grim streets of St. Petersburg often mirrors characters' inner conflicts. Dostoevsky's style deliberately minimizes setting in favor

of stream-of-consciousness style narrative, making each scene a window into Raskolnikov's psyche. Russian Literary Movements: *Crime and Punishment* was written amid the "golden age" of Russian literature. It responds to and critiques contemporary ideologies. While Russian realists often depicted the "concerns of ordinary people," Dostoevsky also built on the intellectual debates of his time. He was engaged in ideas popularized in the radical novel What Is to Be Done? (1863) by Nikolai Chernyshevsky and with the nihilist outlook of Turgenev's Fathers and Sons (1862). Dostoevsky himself acknowledged that he wrote *Crime and Punishment* to counteract the "nefarious consequences arising from the doctrines of Russian nihilism" (4). Thus the work blends faithful social observation (poverty, urban life, the Russian literary "novel of ideas") with an intense psychological and philosophical depth.

Dostoevsky's novel represents "one strand of a realist tradition running throughout the 1860s" in Russia, As Chris Schlegel notes, Dostoevsky's particular form of realism "emphasizes the internal, psychological realities of his characters and focuses less on physical description of place and event," which "represented one strand of a realist tradition running throughout the 1860s in Russia" (Schlegel).

a. Historical Context (19th-Century Russia):

Russia during the 1860s was a country in conflict. The ancient autocratic order was creaking under internal pressures and repressed reforms. The Tsar, Alexander II, emancipated the serfs in 1861, liberating officially millions of peasants from legal bondage. Emancipation did not, however, put an end to economic inequality overnight: the majority of the former serfs remained caught in cycles of poverty and debt ("pseudo bondage" to the land). Industrialization and urbanization were at their peak, but Russia's middle class was minute.

Such big cities as St. Petersburg were filled with poor students, bureaucrats, debtors and overthrown gentry an environment conducive to liberal and radical thinking.

In this environment, European influences and utopian ideologies spread among the intelligentsia. Western liberalism, socialism, or nihilist radicalism was embraced by many young intellectuals who thought to transform Russia's society. One scholar reports that Petersburg and Moscow were "teeming with… intellectuals of all persuasions" disseminating "liberal" ideas derived from French and German. In counterpoint, conservative and nationalist movements (the Slavophiles, for example) rallied to the cause of traditional Russian culture and Orthodoxy.

Acrid societal tensions resulted from this seething. A period of social instability, class warfare, economic hardship, and a government that disregards the poor are all present in *Crime and Punishment*. Poverty and violence were rampant in the city, and economic disparity was widening. The novel generally presents Russia as being torn between modern transformation and medieval stagnation.

b. Dostoevsky's Biography and Intellectual Background:

Fyodor Dostoevsky (1821–1881) was born into a poor noble family and was attracted early to literature and liberal ideology despite the fact that he trained as a military engineer. In the late 1840s he was a member of the Petrashevsky Circle of intellectuals who discussed prohibited Western literature. In 1849 he was arrested for this association which caused him to spend eight months in prison, little did he know that in December of that year he was going to be led out and subjected to a mock execution by firing squad, which would haunt him and inform many of his characters.

After this most horrifying experience he was rescued at the last moment by Tsar Nicholas

I, and his capital punishment was commuted to exile where he spent four years in a Siberian prison camp, and the next four years of compulsory military service. These years were shaping: Dostoevsky himself subsequently stated that the experience made him enormously "appreciate freedom, honesty, and personal responsibility" over the materialist and deterministic worldview of his youthful comrades. He also fell in love with Russian Orthodoxy as the faith of the common man and became more and more condemnatory of radical conspiracies. In the 1850s he returned to Europe, and found that he had shed the Romanticism and embraced a more conservative, Christian ideology.

Fifteen years later, he wrote *Crime And Punishment* and the novel's cynicism regarding ideological fanaticism is a reflection of Dostoevsky's mature outlook. He was closely acquainted with the threat of revolutionary hysteria and state violence, and he knew about the politicized rhetoric of his era. By the 1860s, Dostoevsky was not in sympathy with the untrammeled radicalism of the nihilists nor with the reactionaries' blind obedience; rather, he envied a middle way founded upon religious faith and moral responsibility. That philosophical evolution from idealistic socialist, to prisoner, to orthodox believer finds its expression in the novel's struggle between Raskolnikov's radicalism and Sonya's piety as moral redemption. Dostoevsky's near-death experience profoundly shaped his philosophical outlook. As Gary Saul Morson explains, "The mock execution led Dostoyevsky to appreciate the very process of life as an incomparable gift and, in contrast to the prevailing determinist and materialist thinking of the intelligentsia, to value freedom, integrity, and individual responsibility all the more strongly" (Morson).

c. The "Extraordinary Man" Theory:

One of the book's most basic philosophical notions is the idea of the "extraordinary man.", in which Raskolnikov argues that mankind is divided into ordinary and extraordinary

people. Ordinary people must obey every ethical and legal precept. Extraordinary men, great geniuses and heroes are privileged: they possess a "right" to transgress common morality if needful in order to achieve some greater purpose. Raskolnikov cites examples like Napoleon as the model ones, as Veronica Brown explains, "Raskolnikov's paradigmatic example of an 'extraordinary' man is Napoleon. In creating new laws and a new order, he broke the old social codes, thus becoming a criminal. 'Extraordinary' men, like Napoleon, are not afraid of shedding blood in the pursuit of these new goals because they are aware of the greatness of their task" (Brown).

This man category is considered as a criminal in the letter of the law, although history presents him as a great leader. Thus, in Raskolnikov's opinion, an "extraordinary" man is authorized in the privacy of his own conscience to " to permit his conscience to overstep certain bounds"(Dostoyevsky 206), if that results in a creative or humanitarian idea. He frames it as having the right "to make a new word" (Dostoyevsky 207) and being willing to spill blood for the grandeur of their task. This moralistic individualism definitely has its origins in contemporary ideologies.

In mid 19th century Russia there was a strong tide of utilitarian and nihilist thought among radicals. Intelligentsia like Nikolai Chernyshevsky, the writer of *What Is to Be Done?* advocated rational egoism or socialist utilitarianism. They believed that society could be recreated through purposeful action: the common good of many could be invoked to license law-breaking by the few. Dostoevsky specifically targeted the fusion of French utopian socialism and Benthamite utilitarianism, ideologies that had gained traction among radical intellectual circles. In a letter to his editor, Mikhail Katkov, he explained that *Crime and Punishment* would expose the dangers of utilitarianism and radical nihilism. He wrote that *Crime and Punishment* would depict the dangers of utilitarianism and radical nihilism (Dostoevsky 272–73).

Dostoevsky wanted to show how this callous utilitarian mindset had become universal and commonplace and how it perniciously fostered Raskolnikov's egotistic contempt. Ideologically, both Raskolnikov's thesis can be seen as an incorrect extrapolation of the nihilist idea that both an elite of superior beings might redefine morality the "rational egoists" of the age. Late Russian nihilism often supported the idea that a few special people could lead society forward. Raskolnikov believes he is one of these people a "Napoleon-like" figure with the right to kill for a greater purpose. His thinking shows this idea taken to the extreme. But the story reveals that this belief is harmful. The idea of the "extraordinary man" is shown as a dangerous illusion based on pride and selfishness, not real progress or moral strength.

d. Political Feminist Reading of *Crime and Punishment*:

Crime and Punishment can also be interpreted as a feminist novel due to how women in the novel are portrayed in relation to power, control, and morality. In Dostoevsky's patriarchal society, women characters serve roles related to sacrifice, redemption, or victimhood, which are typically around men's needs. As if all of the women characters are present functionally to serve men and the women who gain any type of power or autonomy are rejected or demonized. In practice, this is to note that women's agency in the novel is nearly entirely limited to moral or domestic spheres, and their individual stories merge with broader issues of gender inequality.

Women in 19th-century Russia as attested to in and outside the novel, had very little autonomy. Even the novel's purported liberal-sounding characters admit this like Razumikhin and Lebezyatnikov. Male characters consistently mock or belittle women, as Calla Campbell observes, "Women are often disrespected in private conversations between men in the novel. Svidrigailov says that 'women find it very, very pleasurable to be insulted' (339). Ilya

Petrovich refers to women seeking an education in medicine as 'short-haired wenches', disparaging their 'immoderate thirst for enlightenment' (634). All of the female characters exist functionally to serve the betterment of men, and those who hold positions of power over men or seek independence are constantly insulted" (Campbell). Women characters in the novel who step out of conventional roles through occupation, learning, or pride tend to provoke hostility. Here, three women characters in the book stand out for feminist analysis:

Sonya Marmeladova, the poor prostitute girl who is forced by circumstances to work as a prostitute to feed her family and hence is morally complex. She is at once the novel's moral center and force of redemption. At the same time, her social power is zero. She is a "conquering" presence whose redemptive love redeems Raskolnikov from himself. Sonya's Christianity and sympathy are more powerful than Raskolnikov's conceited ego. She is the recipient of the initial confession by Raskolnikov, and her tearful appeal and repentance oration. She is described as one of the most powerful in the novel, leading him straight to confession. These are the means whereby Sonya's moral agency cannot be refused. However, her strength is articulated entirely in terms of self-sacrifice. Although she attains spiritual authority, Sonya never attains any economic or social power; her authority stems from having endured suffering, which remains a "shameful" place in society. Altogether, Sonya is the paradox of women's power in the novel: she gives men love and redemption, but her own life is circumscribed by oppression.

Another female character is Avdotya (Dunya) Raskolnikov, the sister of Raskolnikov who is educated, proud and resourceful, but she too lives within a constraining social context. She is nearly sold into a degrading marriage to Luzhin at the beginning of the novel, a plot concocted by her impoverished family's desperation. Even when she has already escaped from Luzhin, Dunya is relentlessly pursued by Svidrigailov, who flirts with her for money but ultimately treats her with disrespect. Despite all these pressures, Dunya always conducts

herself with integrity: she refuses Luzhin's exploitative conditions and contemptuously rejects Svidrigailov's advances. Dunya is a moral supporter of Raskolnikov in a way different from Sonya. In feminist reading, Dunya is a new type of woman assertive and educated but one whose assertiveness is less in the direction of autonomy than defensive. She is steadfast in loyalty, but society doesn't give her a life independent of others' control either. Generally speaking, the women of *Crime and Punishment* are engaged in struggles over power but typically on patriarchally defined terms.

Chapter Two

***Macbeth* and *Crime and Punishment* through**

Psychoanalysis Lens

Throughout literary history, *Macbeth* and *Crime And Punishment* are among the most compelling narratives that have grappled with fundamental questions of human nature, identity, and the search for meaning. Central to both texts are the themes of essentialism, the idea that individuals are determined by an inherent nature, and nihilism which is about the rejection of meaning, value, and moral truth. The second chapter of this study is devoted to analyze the previously mentioned themes which are going to be studied through the psychoanalytical lens of Plato, Kierkegard, Sartre, Niecshe and Freud.

1. **The Essence of Tragedy: An Essentialist Analysis of Macbeth and Raskolnikov.**

Essentialism originated in ancient Greek, when Aristotle and Plato argued that everything has an essence, including us and this essence is the never changing form that defines our nature, which existed way before we're even born, "the good itself is not essence but still transcends essence in dignity and surpassing power" (*Republic* 509b). According to Plato's theory of form, everything in this world contains an inherent purpose for why it exists, it is understood as the universal human nature. A human being comes into this world with a pre-destined life packed with events that will occur in his life and a significant mission to accomplish.

As J. Lyndon Shanley argues in his analysis, *Macbeth's evil,* "Nowhere can we see the essential humanity of Shakespeare more clearly than in *macbeth,* as he shows that the darkest evil may well be human, and so, though horrible, understandable in terms of our own lives and therefore pitiable and terrible." (1) in this passage, Shanley reveals that the idea of evil in *Macbeth* is not of any external factor but of an inherent "essential" nature. Even though the witches might seem like the reason why everything went wrong in Macbeth's life, they are not asking him to take action of any of what they say, "The witches force nothing; they advise nothing; they simply present facts". (Shanley 3). In other words, the witches do not create

Macbeth's fate, but their prophecy triggered his preexisting essence as a flawed human being. This appears when he says: [...] I have no spur\ To prick the sides of my intent, but only\ Vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itself\ And falls on th' other — (1.7, p 45)

Here, he admits that his only motivation to commit the crime is ambition and insecurity and rejects the external force of the witches' prophecy, proving that he is driven by his own flaws. They never tell him to kill Duncan, they only predict he will become king, yet he chooses murder as a way to fulfill the prophecy.

Another key point about essentialism in *Macbeth* lays in the prophecy that the witches give to Macbeth, which highlighted the essentialist thoughts in him, even though he seem to be doubtful in the beginning of the play. It is clear that he believes that he is born for a reason, a pre-ordained sense of greatness, which we can see in Act 1 Scene 3: Two truths are told,\ As happy **prologues** to the swelling **act** Of the imperial **theme**.(1.3, p.37)

This dramatic imagery suggests the idea of a pre-determined life, as if Macbeth's life is already predestined before the events ever happen in his life. He believes that becoming a king will inevitably arrive. His Essentialist mindset appears as he speaks: If chance will have me king, why, chance may\ crown me\ Without my stir. (1.3, p.38)

The word chance refers to 'fate' or 'destiny', he even starts to think that he does not have to take any action to pursue kingship because he believes that it is already ordained to him, meaning that if it were to happen then, he is not supposed to do any effort to achieve it. The phrase "without my stir" highlights his hope that his fate will be fulfilled without needing to act, however his choice to act reveals his true nature. Just like Plato's theory of form, Macbeth's essence is not created by the prophecy but gets exposed.

In analyzing how Shakespeare explores essentialism in *Macbeth,* it is clear that throughout the play he portrayed the existing tension between the essentialist nature of a human being in which he has no power to change, and the voluntary decisions man makes which keeps him always responsible of which path his life takes.

The tragic allure of essentialism unites Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, in both works the protagonists' battle for "greatness". Macbeth being seduced by the witches' promise of kingship and Raskolnikov's belief of "extraordinary man", they both rely on these ideas to justify their violent actions.

From the very beginning of the book, Dostoevsky takes us into the deepest thoughts of Raskolnikov, who appears to believe in this strange idea of extraordinary people. Raskolnikov divides people into two different categories; ordinary people who are meant to follow the rules, and extraordinary people, who are above all the rules, for the sake of a greater purpose. Raskolnikov articulates his theory weeks after he commits the murder, during a tense interrogation with investigator Porphyrius Petrovich, where he says: "The next class, however, consists exclusively of men who break the law, or strive, according to their capacity or power, to do so. Their crimes are naturally relative ones, and of varied gravity. Most of these insist upon destruction of what exists in the name of what ought to exist. And if, in the execution of their idea, they should be obliged to shed blood, step over corpses, they can conscientiously do both in the interest of their idea, otherwise-pray mark this" (208). This exchange exposes Raskolnikov's crumbling psyche: his lofty theory collapses under guilt, foreshadowing his eventual confession.

His idea of being an extraordinary person is rooted in essentialist thinking that some people are born unique with a purpose in life. He seems to be greatly influenced by Napoleon, as he is a symbol of this whole idea in history. This Napoleon complex appears in part 3,

chapter 5, when he was trying to rationalize his crime by comparing himself to historical figures like Napoleon, but in reality, it does only expose his inner turmoil which pushes him to cling to intellectual justifications, where he says: "Would Napoleon have crept under an old woman's bed ?' he might ask. How absurd !" (221). It is a passage that reveals how Raskolnikov views society, and how violence serves as a powerful narrative. It displays also that certain people like Napoleon have the authority to commit atrocities in order to fulfill certain purposes. Therefore this passage reflects his belief in essentialist greatness, justifying his plan of murdering the pawnbroker he views as a philosophical test, a small act of evil for a greater good.

As Rosenshield observes:

> Since Raskolnikov is no Napoleon, and can never hope to become a great military and political figure, he must argue that cultural figures can also be great men and that their contributions are important enough to give them the right to eliminate obstacles to making their ideas known" (87).

Rosenshield's analysis underscores the irony of Raskolnikov's attempt to intellectualize his actions which only highlights his moral and existential smallness. His twisted reinterpretation of the Great Man Theory as a dangerous fantasy appears as he justifies his behavior by comparing himself to Napoleon.

1. **Analyzing Existential Reflections in Macbeth and Raskolnikov**

While philosophers like Aristotle and Plato posit that our purpose in life has been determined prior to our birth, essentialism was criticized during the 19th century and existentialism started to be popularized by other philosophers like Søren Kierkegard and Jean-Paul Sartre. Due to the terrible Holocaust catastrophe people questioned whether "existence precedes essence". Kierkegaard and Sartre argue that we are not born with any

innate mission or pre-destined life, only the freedom to create a meaning for ourselves, "Man is nothing else but what he makes of himself. Such is the first principle of existentialism… Man is condemned to be free" (Sartre 22). But this freedom is more terrifying than liberating because it implies personal responsibility as it redirects the burden of how we live from an external agent like God, to our individual self, which means that we are the only ones who can make of our life what we will.

To Macbeth, Kingship represents the meaning of life, as it gives him power. Therefore, the new meaning displayed in the idea is the central idea of existentialism, and not just being compelled to living the meaning that was designed for us. Unlike Macbeth who is a more of an essentialist character, his wife Lady Macbeth is an Existentialist person because she believes that freedom comes from taking action, which is apparent in her soliloquy after receiving Macbeth's letter about the witches' prophecy, where she says: What thou wouldst highly,\ That wouldst thou holily; wouldst not play false, \And yet wouldst wrongly win. Thou'dst have, great Glamis,\ That which cries 'Thus thou must do' if thou have it,\ And that which rather thou dost fear to do\ Than wishest should be undone.(1.5, p.41)

The repetition of 'do' is to refer to the necessity of taking action, and it is what Lady Macbeth despises the most about her husband, his inability to take action to accomplish anything or create a meaning to his life. But perhaps what was truly holding Macbeth back, is his belief that his purpose will realize itself on its own as a predetermined destiny, rather than fear or human kindness. Which we can see in his soliloquy Act 1 Scene 7: If it **were done** when 'tis done, then 't **were** well\ It **were done** quickly. (44)

Macbeth's use of passive voice in this quote refers to his idea of having his fate already decided for him and he seems to be convinced by it. But as he slowly gets influenced by his wife, his existentialist thoughts appear in his speech, for instance: But in these cases \ We still

have judgement here, that we but teach \ Bloody instructions which, being taught, return

\To plague th'inventor. (44)

His idea of having a judgment shows how he is starting to slowly shift into the understanding of how meaning originates, going from his belief of chance and fate overseeing his life path into recognizing that man has the judgment of taking action in order to fulfill one's desires.

In her student paper "The Existential Macbeth," Vivian Beleyn emphasizes that although Lady Macbeth pressures Macbeth to act, his choice to murder Duncan belongs entirely to him. Even when he is aware of the act's immorality, Macbeth deliberately and decisively commits the crime, demonstrating his existential responsibility for the decision (6). He admits to it when he says: To be thus is nothing,\ But to be safely thus. Our fears in Banquo\ Stick deep, and in his royalty of nature\ Reigns that which would be feared. [...] For Banquo's issue have I filed my mind;\ For them the gracious Duncan have I murdered, \Put rancors in the vessel of my peace\ Only for them. [...]\ Rather than so, come fate into the list,\ And champion me to th' utterance! (3.1.48–75)

It looks like he has already "filed [his] mind" with fears that Banquo's descendants might take away his thrown, and this proves that his actions are not an accident. His existentialism is revealed in this soliloquy showing that he is aware of his wrong decisions, but still does it anyway. We notice that when he says: "For Banquo's issue have I filed my mind; / For them the gracious Duncan have I murdered" that he admits that he has corrupted himslef for nothing.

It is crucial to mention that the existentialist journey in Macbeth asserts that even in a world full of external influences, an individual is still capable of authoring their own life. This is reflected in Macbeth's choices, through his exploration of his own free will, personal

responsibility and the path he takes to create a meaning for his life. Therefore, the tragedy of the play does not lie in the cruelty of fate, but in Macbeth's failure to manage the burden of freedom.

Svidrigailov, who reflects Raskolnikov's darker side, closely mirrors Macbeth's inner struggle. While Macbeth falls into despair when he sees that his violent rule is meaningless, Svidrigailov shows what happens when a person lives without purpose, morals, or real human connection.

Indeed, Svidrigalov is the most interesting existentialist character to be compared to Raskolnikov in the novel, As Nisha and Tyagi argue, "Another important existential character is Svidrigalov who is double of Raskolnikov as he mirrors the protagonist's thoughts and existential way of life. What strikes us about this character is that he confronts Raskolnikov with the answering image of his own mind. Raskolnikov hates him because Savidrigalov is everything that he fails to do. Svidrigailiov lives the same life that was implied by Raskolnikov' s extraordinary theory. Though he starts that life but could not live it for long. The arrival of Sonya awakes the human warmth in Raskolnikov so he moves back from his fundamental theory. But Sividrigailiov, in absence of human warmth, continues to lead that amoral life. "He oversteps everything according to his own free will" (113).

Looking at how thinkers like Sartre and Kierkegaard see existentialist philosophy, it is assumed that the individual faces meaninglessness, isolation and moral freedom. Therefore, Raskolnikov's justification of his crime by having the right to behave without moral grounding highlights the deep existentialist reflections in his mind. However, when and Svidrigailov are compared to each other, Raskolnikov is not psychologically prepared to live in a world of pure freedom, as his conscience takes over his expectations. On the other hand, Svidrigailov lives out to what Raskolnikov would have wanted to become, this is why he

hates him because he represents the embodiment of his intellectual theory, if he had not been held back by guilt and compassion.

In chapter six, when they finally confront each other: "I venture to say that you look upon my discretion as something extraordinary ! So you had better be considerate by way of gratitude !"(402). This confrontation is deeply existential in the way Svidrigailov recognizes himself in Raskolnikov just like two sides of the same theory, one who is existentially empty and ends up committing suicide, and another one who failed but still tries to find meaning in life.

Finally, both *Macbeth* and *Crime And Punishment* portray a universal truth. Existentialism does not become a path which takes to nihilism like we see in Macbeth and Svidrigailov by surrendering to the idea of "extraordinary" delusions, in reality, it can be a reason to confront the burden of freedom and learn how to control it. Dostoyevsky's epilogue suggests that when love and freedom meet, even the most damaged souls can find a way to heal.

2. **Nihilistic Descent in *Macbeth* and *Crime and Punishment***

Nihilism appeared during the nineteenth century. The word's Latin origin "nihil" means "nothing", and was used for the first time by Friedrich Jacobi. Among philosophers, Frederick Nitsche is the most associated with this philosophy, in his view, there is no meaning to life, no true values or belief in this world. He argues that all existence is emptiness, as he writes *The Will to Power* he says: "Nihilism represents a pathological transitional stage… what is pathological is the tremendous generalization, the inference that there is no meaning at all" (12). The statement captures his diagnosis of nihilism as both a cultural crisis and a step toward renewal.

Although Macbeth seems to be a converted existentialist at some point by trying to create meaning, the series of crimes he commits in order to achieve it, is actually the absolute definition of Nihilism. According to Nitsche "Nihilism is... not only the belief that everything deserves to perish but one actually puts one's shoulder to the plough; one destroys." (Nietsche, sec. 24) In other words, the impulsive decisions that Macbeth felt the need to take, like murdering Duncan and his family to preserve the throne, is more of a Nihilistic behavior, as Nitsche states that Nihilism does not consist of logic but more of what he calls "the impulse of destroying"(Nietsche, sec. 24) . which is the irrational impulse to annihilate anything that stands in his way.

Macbeth's slaughter of Macduff's innocent family is a pure massacre; it is not politically calculated but rather an irrational vengeance to assert his dominance through terror. This is accentuated in act 4 scene 1: "The castle of Macduff I will surprise,\ Seize upon Fife, \give to th' edge o' th' sword\ His wife, his babes, and all unfortunate souls\ That trace him in his line." (Act 4, Scene 1, p 79–80)

Macbeth laments Lady Macbeth in a Nihilistic speech which is basically about someone who forced him to an existentialist thinking and then moves on to become the opposite: She should have died hereafter;\ There would have been a time for such a word. \To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,\ Creeps in this petty pace from day to day \To the last syllable of recorded time,\ And all our yesterdays have lighted fools \The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!\Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player \That struts \and frets his hour upon the stage \And then is heard no more: it is a tale\ Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,\ Signifying nothing.(97,98)

It is noteworthy to suggest that Macbeth might have been born an essentialist believing that he was born with a pre-destined purpose, who also becomes a converted and failed existentialist to end up as a Nihilist who is forced to accept that nothing really matters because nothing ever lasts.

Paranoid visions, sleeplessness, and despair are all consequences we see in our protagonists. As they both grapple with the weight of human conscience, Raskolnikov seeks to test his ability to act "nihilistic," and Macbeth pursues power through prophecy. Both discover that their ideologies fall in the front of what is called human vulnerability. Through the comparison of both existential collapse, both works examine the limits of human arrogance that always falls into the trap of the burden of conscience. Macbeth and Raskolnikov become trapped in a prison of guilt and isolation, warning the audience as well as readers that the pursuit of greatness in the expense of humanity which leads to annihilation.

As we read the Dostoievski's novel, it is noticeable how Raskolnikov breaks down after every little mistake he does, and his idea of the "extraordinary man" ultimately collapses. Ijeoma Lena and Bryan J. rightly argue:

> If he were an extraordinary man he would not constantly be obsessed over the details and mistakes made during the crime. By portraying the convoluted and emotionally shaken thoughts of Raskolnikov, the author shows that the theory of an extraordinary man does not apply to him. Raskolnikov ultimately possesses feelings and emotions that he cannot live without and that nihilism does not support (11).

We understand that Raskolnikov tries to embody the nihilist ideal of moral freedom but eventually fails to live according to it, as he proved that he cannot escape morality by being consumed by guilt.

In Part 2, Chapter 1, while confessing to Sonia he says: "Did I really kill the woman ? No, it was myself I killed" (p. 352). It is clear that the real reason why he wants to commit the crime, is not to serve humanity like he tries to convince himself, but to test his ability of acting nihilistic, especially when he says "I killed myself!" proves his recognition of self-destruction, meaning nihilism is not sustainable to him.

To put it in a nut shell, Macbeth's final, hollow lament "Life's but a walking shadow" "Life's but a walking shadow" (5). Parallels Raskolnikov's realization that his crime is not a noble experiment but a test of his own delusions. Raskolnikov through a fragile redemption and Sonya's compassion succeeds to avoid a violent end like that of Macbeth. In the end, neither prophecy nor philosophy can absolve the human heart a truth etched in blood across both Shakespeare's Scotland and Dostoevsky's St. Petersburg.

3. The Freudian 'Unconscious' and 'Death Drive' as an Inescapable Compulsion:

Freud's idea of the "death drive" suggests that people sometimes have a deep urge to repeat destructive behaviors, even when they know these actions are harmful, in his 1920's work *Beyond the Pleasure Principle,* he introduced this idea through suggesting that humans possess an unconscious, instinctual urge to return to a state of inert calm, essentially an inorganic state. This can be seen in acts of self-harm, with suicide being the most extreme example. Macbeth is a great example of this. Despite knowing the witches are untrustworthy (he calls them "secret, black, and midnight hags"), he keeps going back to them, as seen in Act 4, Scene 1, page 76, when he asks them to clarify and validate the prophecy. His eagerness to find answers and more clarification leads him to his destructive pursuit of power.

Macbeth's obsession with the witches is reflected in his repeated demands, like "answer me" and "tell me," as well as the witches' own repetitive chants ("Macbeth!

Macbeth! Macbeth!"). This pattern of repetition highlights his compulsion to keep chasing something that ultimately leads to his downfall.

Another example of his self-destructive behavior is his need to keep killing. After murdering Duncan and becoming king, he doesn't stop. Instead, he's driven to kill Banquo and his son, and later Macduff's entire family, because of the witches' prophecy. Ironically, with each murder, Macbeth moves closer to his own death.

By the end, his famous speech "tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow" in act 5, scene 5 captures the repetitive, empty nature of his life. This repetition mirrors his compulsive, self-destructive choices, turning his story into a tragic example of the death drive in action. Ultimately, Macbeth's downfall isn't about violence only, but also about how the character keeps creating the very situations that lead to his own tragic end.

Freud's idea of the "death drive" suggests that people sometimes have a deep urge to repeat destructive behaviors, even when they know these actions may affect negatively. This can be seen in acts of self-harm, with suicide being the most extreme example. Macbeth is a great example of this. Despite knowing the witches are untrustworthy (he calls them "secret, black, and midnight hags"), he keeps going back to them, as seen in Act 4, Scene 1, when he demands they clarify and validate the prophecy. This need for answers leads him deeper into his destructive pursuit of power. The timeline of his actions shows this:

- Act 2: He kills Duncan.
- Act 3: He orders Banquo and Fleance's murder.
- Act 4: He orders the slaughter of Macduff's family.
- Act 5: He is killed.

To sum up, Freud's concepts of the death drive and the unconscious thus illuminates Macbeth's psychological unraveling, framing his downfall as a product of an inescapable urge to repeat the trauma he both fears and courts.

Freud's concept of the "death drive" finds an interesting parallel in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* as well. A strange impulse to destroy everything rises despite their inevitable ruin. Raskolnikov's desire to ruin whatever crosses his way and his behaviors of repetitive aggression which later on results in regret, and Macbeth, spurred by prophecy and vaulting ambition portray Freud's philosophy. Pulcheria's declaration to Raskolnikov "You are everything to us!" (235) masks a transactional obsession and reduces him to a vessel for her escape from poverty and manifests Freud's death drive in him.

As we delve deeper into the relationship between Raskolnikov and his mother, his mental psychology becomes easier to understand. Pulcheria, his mother, is the perfect portrayal of a narcissistic mother, her great expectations of her son becoming a successful man does not come from the motherly instinct of wanting the good for her child, but from a selfish desire of using him as the last solution for her to fix her financial problems. Pulcheria even expects the same thing from her daughter as she approves of her arranged marriage, knowing it is a loveless one hoping that her narcissistic husband would help her escape poverty. Among all this pressure and chaos around Raskolnikov, the feeling of being a failure to himself and to his family becomes more and more heavy and turns his entire rage and his mother's narcissism into a motif to have those thoughts. In other words, the Freudian death drive is apparent in Part 3, Chapter 3:

will you always love me as much as you do now?" he asked all at once. These words rushed spontaneously from his very heart of hearts long before he had time to weigh

their import. Rodia, Rodia, what is the matter with you ? How can you ask me such a question ? Who will ever presume to say one word against you ? Should anyone dare to do so, I would refuse to listen, and would drive him from my presence. (427-428)

In this passage, we see that the pressure Pulcheria puts on Raskolnikov becomes overwhelming, as she completely depends on him. Even though her words appear affectionate, the intention behind them clearly comes from a narcissistic way of parenting suffocating him more and more.

In other words, Raskolnikov's spiral of self-destruction in *Crime and Punishment* and his obsessive guilt reflect Freud's theory. Raskolnikov's tragedy lies in his inability to escape the cycle his mother's narcissism ignited: a death drive that consumes both himself and the suffocating world he sought to destroy.

Chapter Three

Echoes of guilt

In their works, *Macbeth* and *Crime and Punishment*, Shakespeare and Dostoevsky crystallize the paradox of the human conscience, its echo is clearly apparent in Macbeth's tormented cry: "Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood clean from my hand?" (2.2, 60–63) and Raskolnikov's fever confession: "Did I really kill the woman? No, it was myself I killed" (352). The inquiry into the burden of conscience in these works is not just a literary device but also a mirror held to modernity's own ethical dissonance. Following the second Chapter's psychoanalysis of the characters' guilt and moral breakdown, this final chapter explores how these characters' struggle mirror modern issues. Today, this pattern repeats itself in another form through social media's engineered realities and consumer culture's manufactured dissatisfactions to impose value systems that elevate consumption, personal branding, and social detachment above substantive moral reasoning.

In their article, "*Relevance of Shakespeare's Macbeth in Society*", Vidyapith and bansthali argue that "the relevance of *Macbeth* exists even today. Its quality, universality, victory of good over evil, psychology of characters, over domination of ill will, everything tell the story of today's life. *Macbeth* remains relevant in the modern society because its themes are timeless" (603). Similarly, Dostoyevsky's novel maps to the contemporary world through the delivered themes. It provides a realistic view of the social and moral setting, access to its exploration of the complex relation between good and evil. Religion, morality, the classification of mankind into ordinary and extraordinary individuals keeps the author in a repeated struggle to understand the human psychology.

In the context of this study, conscience is examined as a psychological phenomenon. the mind's way of punishing its own moral failures can be explained through Freudian superego punishing transgression through guilt, : "The superego torments the sinful ego with the same feeling of anxiety and is on the watch for opportunities of getting it punished by the external world" (Civilization and Its Discontents 1930), just like Raskolnikov's fevers guilt.

According to Dostoevsky, conscience can also be a spiritual truth which reveals universal laws that people cannot escape. He insists through Sonya's character on the grief of sin where Raskolnikov says to Sonya: "And what does God do for you?" (265) , and this is manifested when Macbeth learns too late that no power can erase guilt.

By tracing these parallels, this chapter focuses on showing how conscience is still our only defense against manipulation although it is easily exploited. The question is whether one will be able to recognize its dangerous consequences before it destroys him/her in a similar way it does with protagonists Raskolnikov and Macbeth.

In modern society, the way people understand conscience, with the rise of consumerism, individualism, and secularism has made it harder for people to match their own goals with their larger ethical responsibilities. In contrast to the past, when moral standards were frequently imposed from without by religion or customs, consciences nowadays are more likely to be self-regulated and impacted by social media, cultural trends, and psychological awareness. Conscience "only refers to what individuals believe, independently of any external, objective proof or justification. And when people state what they subjectively and conscientiously believe, they acknowledge that other people might (and probably will) subjectively and conscientiously hold different moral views" (Giubilini), in his article "Conscience.", Giubilini argues that conscience is subjective and is not based on universal truths but rather on personal beliefs.

While this internalization might seem like it makes moral struggle more private, more silent, sometimes it makes it more damaging. For instance, in a world driven by overconsumption and material success, individuals often find themselves compromising their values for career advancement, status, or convenience and this mirrors Macbeth's moral betrayal which occurs for the sake of his advancement. While few individuals today would

resort to murder, many may choose to engage in actions they know to be morally wrong in pursuit of advancement, only to be subsequently burdened by guilt, burnout, or a profound sense of disconnection from their true selves.

1. **The Echoes of Conscience and guilt in the Digital Age:**

The earlier chapters demonstrated how Shakespearean plays and Dostoevskian literature produced incredibly adaptable templates for enacting moral conflict and conscience. Shakespeare discovered these problems in the public-political sphere of the Renaissance stage, while Dostoevsky internalized them and anatomized guilt in the claustrophobic quarters of nineteenth-century St. Petersburg. In each instance, satire exposed the fine trade-offs between institutional determinism and human agency while also providing funny respite and acting as a heuristic for conveying reality.

These concepts are carried over into the twenty-first century, but it faces drastically altered sociotechnical circumstances, such as immediate digital distribution, an audience that is internationally networked, and an expanded area of linguistic, intermedial, and cultural translation. Today, satire can be found in a wide range of media ecosystems, from streaming dramas to colloquial meme cultures, which are far larger than the repertory theater or the feuilleton. This chapter interrogates how contemporary satirical texts (broadly construed) renegotiate Shakespeare and Dostoevsky's legacy of moral conflict, paying special attention to the mediating agency of translation.

a. *BoJack Horseman: Self-Awareness, Satire, and the Burden of Moral Memory:*

One of today's best examples of how modern society portrays the internalization of self-induced guilt is the show *BoJack Horseman*, as a contemporary storytelling style, this

timeless struggle with conscience finds a striking parallel in this animated series, where BoJack, the titular character who is a washed-up celebrity, grapples with self-destruction, he perfectly embodies the same moral paradoxes as Macbeth and Raskolnikov. Like Macbeth's ambition and Raskolnikov's intellectual arrogance, BoJack's addiction to fame, self-pity and drugs distorts his ethical compass, leading him to rationalize harm to others while drowning in guilt.

BoJack Horseman is an animated series about a faded TV star called BoJack a self-destructive, alcoholic horse living in Hollywood. At first sight, the show looks like a dark comedy that is filled with animal puns and celebrity satire, but as one keeps watching, its core becomes clearer, a raw and deep exploration of guilt, regret, and the struggle to be a better person, As Rita Russo notes in her article *"The Psychology of Consequence"*: "No TV show I've ever seen has caused me to go from laughing out loud to collapsing into tears in the same 20 minute episode except for Bojack Horseman, all the while contemplating my own life choices" (russo par.1).

Like Shakespeare's Macbeth and Dostoevsky's Raskolnikov, BoJack keeps making terrible choices lying, abandoning friends, hurting loved ones and then justifies them with excuses: "I'm traumatized,""That's just who I am," or "Everyone else is awful too." By showing how these rationalizations fail, the show mirrors classic tragedies par excellence. BoJack's guilt is manifested through nightmares such as drowning in his own sitcom credits in season 6, episode 15 after overdosing on drugs, this leads him to hallucinations making him believe he was drowning in his closing credits, a symbol of his past fame and moral failure, accentuating the fact that conscience can't be silenced.

b. fleabag: Confession, Comedy, and the Female Conscience:

Another example is the modern satirical work *"Fleabag"* (2016–2019) by Phoebe Waller-Bridge, it is a brutally personal and intensely political show at the same time. The play's main character is a lady called fleabag and who's name is never revealed in the series, she is in her thirties and struggles with loss, remorse, and the absurdity of contemporary London living. It's not simply another story of millennial hopelessness, either. What makes *Fleabag* so moving and morally complex is its incapacity to offer the spectator an easy fix.

Fleabag addresses us immediately from the first episode. To break the fourth wall, she quips, jokes, and raises an eyebrow. She does not, however, employ this strategy to steer the plot, in contrast to the certain narrator of a conventional comedy. Her asides turn out to be a protective mechanism. To cope with the loss of her best friend, her failed connections, and everything going wrong in a world that is collapsing around her, she uses these as a coping mechanisms.

The show's humor is sharp and funny, yet it's never fake. As though comedy were a last resort against hopelessness, every chuckle has a hint of agony. Fleabag is spiritually similar to Dostoevsky's most tortured characters in that regard. Similar to Raskolnikov, she yearns for atonement while toying with destruction. However, her conscience is fashioned by guilt, loss, and a failed love, not by murder or dogma.

> Although Fleabag's guilt is initially mature, the fact that she has been living with this strong sense of guilt for a long period of time and, above all, that she begins to feel guilty for all other situations that are not related to Boo suggests that the type of guilt has transformed from mature to persecutory (Grobas Barciela 26).

Season 2 deepens this exploration through Fleabag's unexpected relationship with a Catholic priest. Their chemistry is electric, but it's also full of spiritual tension. The priest,

himself battling doubt, recognizes Fleabag's inner turmoil. In Season 2, Episode 1 He sees her turn to face the camera and says, "Where did you just go?" in one of the most remarkable scenes in the episode. This is the first time anyone in her world has recognized that she has been performing all along. A raw, exposed conscience is what remains when the show breaks down the barrier between subject and spectator at that precise time.

Ultimately, *Fleabag* is more than a comedy, it's a confessional and a reckoning. In front of a crowd, a lady wants us to see her whole self and see if we can identify with any of her paradoxes. It reminds us that satire isn't always about making fun of other people and that sometimes entails telling the truth in a way that is so harsh and direct that it is difficult to ignore. Whether it's a soliloquy, a fevered confession, or a fourth-wall-breaking glance, these moments remind us that satire and storytelling still serve as vessels for ethical reflection. Modernity cannot erase Conscience; it only reframes it, filteres, and sometimes distorted it, but always remains present. The enduring relevance of Macbeth, Raskolnikov, BoJack, and Fleabag lies in their shared humanity: the universal recognition that our actions, no matter how justified, carry consequences the self cannot easily forget.

2. Digital Irony: Memes, Micro-Satire, and Algorithmic Conscience:

As previously discussed, conscience continues to be a disruptive and enduring force despite changes in the psychological and societal contexts surrounding it. Today's internet environment reinvents that expression through simplicity, irony, and performance, whereas traditional literature used dramatic analysis and structured monologue to convey moral struggle. The methods of communicating ethical quandaries have evolved from stage soliloquies and the inner voices of novels to TikTok confessionals, trending hashtags, and reaction memes. Though it has been reframed inside algorithmic logic, visibility, and attention, the weight of conscience has not disappeared. This chapter examines how memes and micro-satire function as contemporary tools for expressing ethical discomfort, highlighting both complicity and critique in a fragmented digital moral economy.

As Phillips and Milner assert, "The meme is the message: irony has become the lingua franca of digital culture" (15). Social media, particularly TikTok, compresses the moral exposition of a Shakespearean soliloquy into sixty-second vignettes. The agonizing "To be or not to be" of Hamlet becomes the choked-back tears in a "day in my life" confessional. Marwick observes that "while Hamlet delays action through speech, TikTok hastens expression without resolution" (88). This frantic pace invites the appearance of sincerity while allowing irony to mask vulnerability.

Shakespeare's soliloquies serve as tools to investigate the characters' minds, in addition to being theatrical devices. Rather than being lazy, Hamlet's reflective pause is a sign of moral struggle, When he asks, "To be, or not to be: that is the question," he is not looking at existence in a vacuum, but he is wrestling with the consequences of action, guilt, and ethical ambiguity. The moral aspect of soliloquy is made further clearer in *Macbeth*. When Macbeth

exclaims, "Is this a dagger which I see before me, the handle toward my hand?" (2.1.33), he is already seduced by an internal ethical hallucination. The soliloquy externalizes his split self.

Similarly, Dostoevsky's characters, especially Raskolnikov in *Crime and Punishment*, grapple with conscience through relentless inner dialogue. He believes that reason can conquer conscience, but finds himself tormented by his own interior court. Joseph Frank writes that "Raskolnikov believes he can become a Napoleon, yet he is ultimately broken not by society but by the voice within" (320). TikTok and meme culture parody this by creating ironic dialogues with the self. Users perform duets with their past selves, responding to old videos as if staging Dostoevskian inner conflict with a comic twist.

The transition from monologue to confession is not merely a shift in medium, but a shift in ethical frame. TikTok's confessional mode, where users cry, apologize, or self-deprecate in bite-sized content, resembles the pseudo-religious confession booth. But instead of absolution, they seek validation via likes and shares. This raises the question: can collective witnessing on digital platforms substitute for moral reckoning? Dean suggests that "digital testimonies such as #AmINext enact a ritual of witnessing, where irony deflects yet simultaneously intensifies trauma" (43). Memes that repeat trauma are not passive; rather, they are a public form of moral processing.

Tragic stories are juxtaposed with amusing reaction images in hashtag activism, like #AmINext. This combination creates a communal moral reflex that is both powerful and transient, which we might refer to as a "quick-silver conscience." Memes' visual rhetoric serves as a semantic link between sarcasm and sincerity in these situations. For instance, posting a SpongeBob meme as a caption for a depressing tale is not just rude; it creates an uncomfortable conflict. Humor becomes the mechanism through which audiences metabolize moral pain.

As Whitney Phillips notes, "Memes mutate as confessions wrapped in critique they both reveal and conceal pain" (102). These digital artifacts produce recursive loops of affect: they begin as earnest posts, get remixed into satire, and often return to earnestness through empathetic engagement. Thus emerges a satirical conscience loop, wherein every viewer becomes both critic and complicit party.

The memetic framework allows satire to emerge in real time. Each iteration each remix, re-caption, or stitch adds new commentary on the original, often highlighting complicity in the spread of pain. Shifman argues that "to remix is to moralize; each iteration adds its own frame of judgement" (73). In this sense, memes function as recursive mini-sermons: humorous, yes, but saturated with moral weight. When a meme about climate change juxtaposes Greta Thunberg's face with apocalyptic fires and SpongeBob's mocking voice, the result is absurd and devastating.

This moral economy becomes complicated by algorithmic censorship. Platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and Twitter (now X) promote engagement over critique. Satire is often sanitized into snark, filtered through moderation policies designed not for ethical nuance but for advertiser compatibility. Tarleton Gillespie notes, "content moderation is less about ethics than about optics satire becomes sanded down to snark" (112). The algorithm, seeking engagement, promotes what is palatable, not what is provocative. As Zuboff explains, "what gets promoted is what generates clicks, not moral discourse" (198).

The result is a dilution of moral urgency. Echo chambers develop, in which like-minded users repeat the same critiques until they lose meaning. Goriunova writes, "the networked image mocks, remembers, critiques sometimes all at once" (57). But when memes are absorbed into these loops, their ethical power often fades. What began as a striking moment of satire becomes a template for performance.

Nevertheless, digital satire retains ethical potential when it disrupts these algorithmic loops. Moments of rupture sincere absurdity, awkward self-awareness, ironic reversals can reclaim satire's moral edge. Jacques Rancière's notion of "a redistribution of the sensible" becomes apt: the meme that refuses to be funny, the ironic post that turns out to be painfully real, these function as aesthetic-political acts (39). Test asserts that "satire, when not neutered, reclaims its ancient purpose: to disturb the powerful and provoke the conscience" (122).

Take the well-known TikTok video, for example, where a user superimposes apocalyptic images with the phrase, "me watching the world burn while sipping my iced coffee." What could seem like casual nihilism is actually a form of confession: an admission of hopeless complicity. These micro-satires stage the very paradox of moral existence in a system we cannot control. They echo Raskolnikov's tormented awareness he too watches himself commit to an idea he finds repugnant.

Historical resonance reveals this continuity. In *Macbeth*, Shakespeare stages a profound confrontation with guilt. "Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood clean from my hand?" (2.2.78) prefigures the digital confessor asking if one can ever be clean in a world of infinite pasts and endless screens. Dostoevsky's 19th-century Russia, riddled with moral idealism and nihilistic critique, provides a fertile echo of our fractured present. Richard Kearney argues, "Scotland, 19th-century Russia, and now the setting changes, but not the haunting" (202). Memes that repeat trauma are not passive; rather, they are a public form of moral processing.

Tragic stories are juxtaposed with amusing reaction images in hashtag activism, like #AmINext. This combination creates a communal moral reflex that is both powerful and transient, which we might refer to as a "quick-silver conscience." In many cases, sarcasm and sincerity are semantically linked by the visual rhetoric of memes. For instance, using a

SpongeBob meme as a caption for a depressing article is not only rude, but it also creates an awkward situation. These examples suggest that 30-second animated snippets are now used to spread moral messages that were previously taught through literature or stage speeches. The platforms change, but the ethical weight remains.

The inescapability of conscience is dramatized differently across media, but the struggle persists. Even when cloaked in humor or algorithmically buried, it resurfaces. Ngai observes that "modern irony is a mask for moral panic" (139). That panic, when seen clearly, becomes a powerful force not just for critique, but for transformation.

Digital irony represents the latest iteration of moral confrontation rapid, recursive, and mediated through algorithms. Though threatened by dilution, its power lies in its ability to stage the drama of conscience for a fragmented yet collective audience. As Coleman writes, "In every joke, a little truth; in every meme, a little mirror" (187). And as Bakhtin reminds us, "conscience, like satire, survives by adaptation but never by disappearance" (89).

To conclude, Scotland, 19th-century Russia, and modern age still share a haunting lesson that no matter how clever the excuse is, conscience cannot be silenced. people can choose to ignore our burden of conscience, but ignoring it only deepens the turmoil, which will always result with proving that no matter how much moral accountability can be painful, it remains inescapable. This analysis explores how these characters' struggle mirror our own battles with guilt in an age of distraction, urging us to ask: Can we confront our choices before they destroy us?

3. The Algorithmic Superego: How Platforms Punish and Reward Moral Behavior:

The age of the algorithm has quietly redefined the contours of moral behavior. If earlier epochs located conscience in the whisper of God, the judgment of community, or the private torment of the self, the 21st century increasingly locates it in the datafied feedback loops of platform governance. The superego, as Freud understood it a psychic authority formed by internalized parental and social pressures has not vanished in modernity, but rather migrated into the logics of digital media. It no longer only torments us internally with guilt, but now polices, rewards, and punishes us publicly, in the form of trending hashtags, virality metrics, and content moderation policies. This section examines how the digital superego, powered by algorithms and social feedback, has become a new moral arbiter both echoing and distorting earlier literary visions of conscience in Shakespeare and Dostoevsky.

In *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Freud describes the superego as "The sense of guilt, the harshness of the super-ego, is thus the same thing as the severity of the conscience. It is the perception which the ego has of being watched over in this way, the assessment of the tension between its own strivings and the demands of the super-ego" (Freud 135). Yet in our current landscape, this is mediated by engagement statistics, influencer dynamics, and algorithmic judgment. What was once the internal voice of duty is now often replaced by the immediate reactions of a digital crowd. The moral compass is shaped less by internal rumination and more by the real-time responses of audiences and the hidden rules of recommendation systems.

a. **Moral Metrics and the Economy of Likes:**

Today, morality has become quantifiable. Likes, shares, reposts, duets, and stitches are more than just modes of interaction they function as a symbolic economy of ethical approval. A confession video about past misdeeds, when flooded with heart emojis and supportive comments, becomes not only a cathartic act but a morally approved spectacle. The viewer's validation stands in for forgiveness.

In the same way that Raskolnikov seeks punishment through Sonya's spiritual guidance and moral confrontation, users today look to audience response for reconciliation. But the internet offers no real absolution only analytics. Carissa Véliz writes in *Privacy Is Power* that "They try to predict and influence our behaviour. They have too much power. Their power stems from us, from you, from your data." (Véliz 5). The self is split: one part living, another part curating. One is the private self; the other, an avatar measured by ethical legibility and aesthetic control.

Thus emerges a paradox: the more visible the conscience becomes, the less meaningful it risks becoming. Whitney Phillips and Milner Ryan M. argue that "Not because they're unethical, but because they don't realize there's anything to be ethical about. This is a trap; there's always something to be ethical about." (Phillips and Milner 186). Influencers may post apology videos using melancholy filters and somber background music, performing repentance while bypassing real accountability. These confessions, scripted and stylized, become monetized content.

b. The Superego as Surveillance:

Freud's superego is essentially a form of psychic surveillance. In the digital age, however, this surveillance is no longer internal; it is externalized into platforms. TikTok, YouTube, and Instagram operate as regimes of visibility, where content is ranked, filtered, and

promoted based on rules of engagement. These rules do not reward moral complexity they reward engagement.

As Tarleton Gillespie notes in *Custodians of the Internet*, "Content moderation is a key part of what social media platforms do that is different, that distinguishes them from the open web: they moderate (removal, filtering, suspension), they recommend (news feeds, trending lists, personalized suggestions), and they curate (featured content, front-page offerings)... to produce the 'right' feed for each user, the 'right' social exchanges, the 'right' kind of community" (Gillespie 208). Algorithms promote posts that trigger interaction, even if that interaction is outrage or shallow approval.

Thus, the algorithm becomes a kind of digital superego. It does not preach morality through inner guilt but enforces behavioral norms through filtering, visibility, and shadow banning. The ethical is conflated with the visible; the good is what the feed favors.

c. The Crowd as Conscience:

In Freud's theory, the superego is formed through parental authority and social constraint. Online, it is formed through the gaze of followers and the threat of public reaction. Morality becomes performative because it is never private it is curated for an audience. This makes contemporary digital users resemble actors in a moral theater, constantly improvising confessions, explanations, and repositionings.

This condition is what theorists now call "confessional capitalism" a culture in which vulnerability, guilt, and apology are traded as currency. As Sianne Ngai argues in *Ugly Feelings*, "Feelings are as fundamentally 'social' as the institutions and collective practices that have been the more traditional objects of historicist criticism... and as 'material' as the linguistic signs and significations that have been the more traditional objects of literary

formalism" (Ngai 25). The platform rewards a certain genre of emotion, just as literature once rewarded the dramatic soliloquy. But whereas Macbeth's guilt spirals into existential horror, the influencer's apology often loops into content strategy.

d. The Algorithm Does Not Forgive:

If the old superego sought to reconcile the ego with moral law, the new algorithmic superego seeks alignment with platform rules. There is no spiritual redemption only the hope that old videos won't resurface. A deleted tweet can be screen-captured and archived indefinitely; a controversial post can be recirculated without context.

Zygmunt Bauman writes in *Liquid Modernity* that "One of the requirements that apply to them all is that they are expected 'have a public duty' to confess for public consumption and put their private lives on public display... the way individual people define individually their individual problems and try to tackle them deploying individual skills and resources is the sole remaining 'public issue' and the sole object of 'public interest'" (Bauman 72). This confession is not neutral. It must align with platform culture, follow trends, and respond to the algorithm's logic. One does not apologize; one rebrands. The algorithm does not forgive because it does not care it only calculates.

e. Toward a Post-Digital Conscience:

Can conscience survive the platform? Some creators challenge the algorithmic superego through rupture. They post silent videos, refuse to monetize moral content, or critique the logic of the platform itself. These interventions attempt to reclaim conscience from the spectacle, to remember that ethical life cannot be reduced to metrics.

Jacques Rancière argues that politics begins "Politics revolves around what is seen and what can be said about it, around who has the ability to see and the talent to speak, around the

properties of spaces and the possibilities of time" (*The Politics of Aesthetics* 13). The ethical moment in the digital age is similar: it begins when the expected script is broken. The TikTok user who refuses to edit out their silence, the meme that refuses to be funny these are small rebellions of conscience.

As Bakhtin reminds us, "Carnival laughter builds its own world in opposition to the official world, its own church versus the official church, its own state versus the official state... [It has] an indissoluble and essential relation to freedom" (Bakhtin 89). The superego has not vanished it has migrated. Its voice may now come through notifications, deplatforming, or a sudden loss of followers. But its function remains the same: to demand that the self justify itself.

General Conclusion

A topic as old as storytelling itself has guided us throughout this dissertation: what happens when someone does something they know is bad but are unable to accept? From Macbeth's blood-soaked hands to Raskolnikov's frantic outbursts to BoJack Horseman's digital breakdowns, guilt seems to have echoed throughout history. Identity distortion, emotional strain, and mental distortion are all caused by it.. What changes, however, is the way each era expresses that guilt, how conscience, as an internal struggle, is framed, performed, or repressed.

The first chapter began by situating *Macbeth* and *Crime and Punishment* in their own time periods not to box them into historical context, but to understand how they emerged from their cultures' deepest moral anxieties. In Shakespeare's Macbeth, written during a time when divine order and kingship were not just political but spiritual truths, guilt is cosmic. When Macbeth acts against that order, the world itself seems to react, weather turns strange, nature grows violent, and his own mind starts to slip. Shakespeare doesn't just show us a guilty man; he shows us what happens when the universe is thrown off balance by one ambitious, fearful decision.

Dostoevsky, writing in 19th-century Russia, lived in a world where morality no longer had the same divine foundation. The questions were harder: What if God is dead? What if good and evil are just opinions? Raskolnikov, his troubled protagonist, asks these questions and then tests them with a murder. But instead of finding freedom, he collapses under the weight of something older and deeper than reason: guilt that doesn't go away just because you explain it away. In both works, we saw that conscience isn't simply inherited from culture or religion it rises up when the self becomes divided, when a person tries to be something they're not.

The second chapter focused more closely on this inner breakdown. With the help of psychoanalytic and existentialist theory, we explored how Freud's "superego" and Nietzsche's "extraordinary man" shaped the inner logic of both Macbeth and Raskolnikov. What we found was unsettling but familiar: both characters believe they are above ordinary morality, and both are ultimately destroyed by that belief. Their tragedies aren't just external they are internal implosions. They are undone by shame, according to Freud; by despair, according to Kierkegaard; and possibly by self-deception, according to Nietzsche, However, the story stays the same regardless of the language: conscience always returns.

We then took this long-standing struggle into the present in the last chapter. Guilt hasn't disappeared; it's simply gone viral, as demonstrated by *BoJack Horseman*, memes, humorous TikTok confessionals, and contemporary satire. These days, people use 60-second movies to admit their worst errors. They joke about depression with SpongeBob images. They apologize, sometimes sincerely, sometimes performatively, in front of millions. At first glance, this looks like moral decay, or maybe emotional exhibitionism. But looking closer, we noticed something else: this, too, is conscience. This, too, is people trying to make sense of their mistakes in the only language they've been given performance, irony, audience reaction.

Like Raskolnikov and Macbeth, BoJack is unable to get away from himself. He goes through phases of self-destruction, confession, guilt, and denial. But unlike most popular literary figures, he lives in a society where morality is diffused, marketed, and constantly on display to other people, therefore When he makes an effort to take responsibility for his actions, it's hard to tell if he is truly sorry or if he is just trying to avoid another storm of negative attention. But despite the chaos, the jokes, and the filters, there are moments of real tension. There are times when the pain peeks through his façade. The old voice of conscience resurfaces in those moments.

Looking back across these three chapters, a pattern emerges. Conscience doesn't vanish; it evolves. It changes costume. In Shakespeare's world, it speaks in iambic pentameter. In Dostoevsky's, it rambles in existential monologue. In ours, it is stitched into memes and filtered through hashtags. But no matter the form, the function remains the same: it interrupts. It refuses to let us move on. It tells us we have crossed a line even if no one else notices.

Literature and art give form to this interruption where they bring to light things that people try to keep hidden most of the time, such as regret, guilt, and the internal conflict between our desires and our real selves. These pieces are mirrors rather than merely narratives. They compel us to pose awkward queries. With our guilt, what do we do? Can we be forgiven? Do we deserve to be?

Raskolnikov, BoJack, and Macbeth all teach us that we cannot avoid the consequences of our decisions, even though they try to it in different ways. The judgment finally comes, whether it originates with God, society, or the self. Nevertheless, there is hope in this. Conscience is still there if it can reappear in a world as disorganized, preoccupied, and pessimistic as ours. If guilt still hurts, then we are still capable of moral feeling.

This dissertation does not argue that guilt is good, or that all remorse leads to redemption. Sometimes guilt paralyzes. Sometimes it destroys. But it also signals something essential: the ability to recognize harm, to feel the weight of one's choices, and to imagine the possibility of change. Conscience is not a punishment. It is a chance not always taken, but always offered. Thus, we discover a commonality whether we compare a Russian student, a Scottish thane, and a shabby animated horse. Not in their circumstances, but in their capacity to carry the inexplicable weight of their sins. This load, this pain, is what makes them human, and it also makes the best literature so brutally honest.

In the end, we do not read these stories to watch guilt win. We read them to understand what guilt means. We read them to ask: What would I have done? Could I bear what they bear? Can I face what I've done? Literature doesn't give easy answers. But it gives us the language to begin asking better questions. And perhaps that is where conscience lives not in punishment, but in reflection.

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Résumé:

Cette dissertation propose une étude comparative de la culpabilité, de la conscience et de la chute morale à travers *Macbeth* de Shakespeare, *Crime et Châtiment* de Dostoïevski, et des récits contemporains. Elle explore la dimension psychologique et philosophique de la conscience humaine à travers des approches historiques, existentielles et psychanalytiques. Le premier chapitre replace les œuvres dans leur contexte. Chez Shakespeare, l'ordre divin et les rôles genrés structurent la tragédie morale. Chez Dostoïevski, l'effondrement intérieur de Raskolnikov reflète les tensions idéologiques et sociales de la Russie du XIXe siècle. Les deux protagonistes sont piégés par leur foi en une grandeur qui les dépasse. Le deuxième chapitre s'appuie sur Freud, Nietzsche et Sartre pour analyser comment Macbeth et Raskolnikov s'autodétruisent sous l'effet de la culpabilité et de la perte de leur identité. Leur punition n'est pas judiciaire, mais psychique. Le troisième chapitre s'ouvre sur notre ère numérique. Il analyse comment la conscience morale apparaît aujourd'hui dans des œuvres comme *BoJack Horseman* ou *Fleabag*, ainsi que dans les aveux publics sur les réseaux sociaux. Même sous forme de performance ou d'ironie, la conscience survit. Le sentiment de culpabilité reste, bien qu'il change de langage et de cadre. La conclusion affirme que la conscience, malgré les mutations historiques et technologiques, demeure une constante humaine que la littérature met en lumière, génération après génération.

Mots-clés : Conscience, Culpabilité, Conflit moral, *Macbeth*, *Crime et Châtiment*, Satire contemporaine.

Agzul:

Asaru-agi yessefru asafu n wemdan deg *Macbeth*, *Crime and Punishment*, akked tefsit n tmedyazt tamaynut. Tetmeslay-d γef Macbeth akked d usafu ynes, d wamek i a th d issegzi Shakespeare. Di Dostoevsky, Raskolnikov iḥesb ar d argaz ameqqran, yebγa ad yegbel lmut n wawal s wawal. Mačči lḥukum i yessur, maca d yiman-is i tγebren. Wis sin n wqerru yettusefru s wawal n Freud (death drive), Nietzsche d Sartre. Ikkes-ed acu i d-yegγen: tikli d yiferku n tsura. Wis Kraḍ yessefru ddunit n tazdayt: *BoJack Horseman*, *Fleabag*, akked TikTok. Lḥeqq akked tugga ttban di memes. Ur tmut ara tmeslayt, tbedel lkelma nnsen. Taggalt tban ar tmeslayt d asebruy yettwasen. Iqqim d awal n wul s wawal n tamedyazt deg yal tikli, Asaru-agi yebnan γef usafu ibeddel, maca yettwasen di yal zman.

Awalen n tsura : Asafu**,** Urti**,** Macbeth**,** Crime and Punishment**,** Tmedyazt tamaynut

ملخّص:

تتناول هذه الأطروحة دراسة مقارنة لموضوع الضمير والشعور بالذنب والانهيار الأخلاقي عبر ثلاثة عصور: في ماكبث لشكسبير، الجريمة والعقاب لدوستويفسكي، وأعمال سردية معاصرة. تستند إلى تحليل نفسي وفلسفي وجودي لفهم كيف يتفاعل الإنسان مع ضميره في مواجهة الخطأ. في الفصل الأول، يتم تحليل السياق التاريخي والفكري الذي خرجت منه الأعمال. يظهر ماكبث كرمز للفوضى الناتجة عن الطموح والخلل في النظام الإلهي، بينما يعكس راسكولنيكوف صراع الذات مع أفكار التفوق الأخلاقي والعدمية في روسيا القرن التاسع عشر. الفصل الثاني يستخدم مفاهيم فرويد (دافع الموت)، نيتشه، وسارتر لفهم كيف ينهار الأبطال من الداخل، حيث لا تأتي العقوبة من الخارج، بل من الضمير الذي لا يرحم. أما وثقافة الاعترافات العلنية، *Fleabag*، *BoJack Horseman* الفصل الثالث، فينقل النقاش إلى عصرنا الرقمي. من خلال على الإنترنت، تُعرض أشكال جديدة من الصراع الأخلاقي. رغم هيمنة السخرية والتمثيل والميمز، يبقى الضمير حاضرًا، يتخذ أشكالًا جديدة لكنه لا يختفي. تخلص الأطروحة إلى أن الضمير الإنساني قوة ثابتة عبر الزمن، تتغير وسائله ولغته، لكنه يظل يُذكرنا بمن نكون وما فعلنا

الكلمات المفتاحية: الضمير، الذنب، ماكبث، الجريمة والعقاب، فرويد، سارتر، العصر الرقمي