




## Shakespearean Paradigm of Villainies from *Hamlet* by Shakespeare and Locating Villainies in Modernity and Modern Politics

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### Abstract

*Hamlet* by Shakespeare gives rise to discussion on Hamlet's attitude to women, fulfillment of the readers' expectation of justice, connection of Hamlet's death with socio-moral values, impact of the pirate politics of the Elizabethan period on Hamlet, and Hamlet's revenge maintaining morality. But there is an unexplored area of unearthing the nature of the villainies by Claudius and Gertrude to understand the Shakespearean paradigm of villainy and applying the paradigm to locate the villainies of the modern world. Thus, this study aims at exploring how, from the villainies of Claudius and Gertrude in *Hamlet*, Shakespeare constructs his paradigm of villainy and how, by applying the paradigm, villainies in modernity and modern politics can be located. To conduct this study, the approaches of moral criticism and New Humanism were utilized. The results show that ingratitude, vulgarity, chaos, amoral ambitions and their amoral means, and deceptions, as held by Claudius and Gertrude, construct the Shakespearean paradigm of villainy. By applying this paradigm, villainies have been identified in modernity and modern politics, especially that of the USA. The findings of the research may contribute to enlightening the readers by unmasking the intricate doings of evil both in *Hamlet* and the modern world.

Keywords: *Hamlet*, Modernity, Modern Politics, Shakespeare, Villainies

## Introduction

*Hamlet* (1600) is perhaps one of the most widely read and widely discussed dramas beside *Macbeth* among all the dramas by Shakespeare. With renewed enthusiasm, critics consistently pay attention to *Hamlet*. In *Hamlet*, Hamlet's attitude toward women is always noteworthy and has been examined. Then, the motion of *Hamlet* is studied comparatively to see whether or not it fulfills readers' expectations of establishing justice. The impact of Hamlet's death on socio-moral values has also attracted critical lens. Similarly explored is Hamlet's connection with Elizabethan monarchs' practice of hiring pirates for their political gains. Also studied is Hamlet's action of revenge, maintaining moral codes.

This being the research backdrop of *Hamlet*, there appears to be a hitherto unexplored area of research. The area is the Shakespearean paradigm of villainy revealed through Claudius and Gertrude in the drama and, with the same paradigm, determining the locations of villainies in modernity and modern politics. To know about the area, the research makes an inquiry into what elements constitute the Shakespearean paradigm of villainy in *Hamlet* and then, applying the paradigm, where actually the villainies of modernity and modern politics exist.

Knowing about the Shakespearean paradigm of villainy in *Hamlet* is important because Shakespeare's observation on human nature is in-depth and comprehensive. So, through knowledge about the paradigm, readers may have a thorough idea regarding villainy and evil so that they can easily identify them and remain away from them. Then, with the Shakespearean paradigm of villainy, locating villainies in modernity and modern politics is important because the issues of villainy naturally include the issues of morality, which are almost non-existent in the modern world. Here in the modern world, science is so dominant that "even our ethical aspirations tend to be guided by scientific findings" (Faruque, 2024, p. 11). Poole (2012) posits, for one, that the idea of a complete sound moral life "... is to seek guidance on a coherent, meaningful, and satisfying existence for oneself" (pp. 116-117). Poole (2012) writes, "[It is to] conceive my identity in social terms, then the life that is satisfying for me as an individual is also a life that contributes to social well-being" (p. 117). Frustratingly enough, "This fuller conception of morality has been all but lost in the modern world" (Poole, 2012, p. 117). In this scenario, modernity appears with iridescent color, which dazzles, causing inability to see its real nature. Modern politics appear with fascinating rhetoric and assurances of material gains, which again hinder seeing the actual characteristics of the politics. Here, the Shakespearean paradigm of villainy, as Shakespeare is always relevant, will be helpful for the readers to identify villainies in modernity and modern politics despite all the difficulties, so that they can reject them and think of human well-being in the true sense.

In *Hamlet*, the setting Shakespeare has chosen is Denmark. When the play opens, there is already a new king, Claudius, on the throne. The former king was King Hamlet,

Claudius's elder brother. As the news has spread, King Hamlet succumbed to death being bit by a poisonous snake. Prince Hamlet, the late King Hamlet's son, returns from Germany on receiving the news of his father's death. From the very beginning, Prince Hamlet remains in doubt about the authenticity of the reason for his father's death mentioned in circulated news. At one stage, the ghost of the late king appears and informs us that Claudius killed him. Then, Prince Hamlet makes a plan to pretend madness for convenience while he will further investigate the matter. By arranging a play in the royal palace and seeing the reaction of Claudius, Prince Hamlet convinces himself of the authenticity of the revelation made by the Ghost, that is, Claudius killed King Hamlet. Meanwhile, Hamlet's mother, Gertrude, consents to marry Claudius, and she remains the queen of the country. Her action hurts Hamlet severely. Claudius outwardly shows he is caring about Hamlet. But inwardly he tries to kill Hamlet. Towards the end of the drama, Claudius makes a final attempt to kill Hamlet by arranging a combat with Laertes, the son of Polonius, who is the Lord Chamberlain of Claudius. In this conspiratorial event, Hamlet dies. But Claudius, Gertrude, and Laertes cannot escape death either. They die miserable deaths too. Significantly enough, in this drama, Shakespeare conveys the paradigm of villainy by showing the villainous activities of Claudius and Gertrude.

As the present study, after its concentration on *Hamlet*, includes modernity and modern politics as the domains where villainies may be traced with the Shakespearean paradigm, we may now pay attention to what modernity means. In this regard, Snyder (2024) writes,

Modernity [is] the self-definition of a generation about its own technological innovation, governance, and socioeconomics. To participate in modernity was to conceive of one's society as engaging in organizational and knowledge advances that make one's immediate predecessors appear antiquated or, at least, surpassed. The eminent Victorians thus appeared old-fashioned to a new generation of "moderns" at the beginning of the 20th century, and the motto of poets of the time was to "make it new." (para. 1)

If it comes to modern politics, we must say that the politics has a visible and invisible impact of modernity. Besides, even after almost six hundred years, the impact of Niccolo Machiavelli (1469-1527) is present on modern politics because "Niccolo Machiavelli's teachings have never gone out of fashion; no doubt because power remains a central aspect of modern political and corporate life" (Galie & Bopst, 2006, p. 235). This modern politics is chiefly represented by the USA, the most powerful and influential country of the contemporary modern world.

### Literature Review

There are many studies on *Hamlet*, as we discover when we do a study of the

literature on the topic of our investigation. When the representative researches in accordance with our topic are concentrated on, we find a study conducted by Rahman (2009), who sets his critical lens on Hamlet, the protagonist of *Hamlet*, to examine whether he is really a misogynist or not. The research tries to examine the circumstances that give a particular shape in Hamlet about women. Then, another research conducted by Nozen et al. (2021) places *Hamlet* in a comparative study with *Sherlock Holmes* by Doyle. From this comparative study, what has been figured out is that in both the literary pieces, the motions are away from readers' expectations but eventually return to the domain of justice at last. Another research view is that in the drama *Hamlet*, Hamlet dies a physical death, but simultaneously, there is the death of the social and moral values of Elsinore society (Sagheer & Auktum, 2021). Yet another research explores the connection of Hamlet with the fact that the early-modern English monarchs would hire pirates as monarchs' men in disguise to violently eliminate the opponent (Simanto, 2023). When it comes to Hamlet's revenge, according to another research, it must be stated that he feels compelled to keep it within the circumference of morality (Mabkhoot et al., 2024).

Thus, Shakespeare's *Hamlet* has been studied in a variety of fields. However, there is a part of the drama that has not been touched on yet. It involves closely examining the evil parts that Claudius and Gertrude performed, as well as the villainy paradigm that Shakespeare ultimately established. The unexplored area also includes locating villainies in modernity and modern politics using the Shakespearean paradigm of villainy. This is the research gap our present study concentrates on and tries to find answers to the research questions, as mentioned in the introduction.

### Methods

In this study, the approaches of moral criticism and New Humanism were the methods applied to analyze the villainies of Claudius and Gertrude in *Hamlet* as they antagonize morality and humanity. Then, the result of that analysis was utilized to diagnose the villainies of modernity and modern politics.

Moral criticism of literature or art has been advocated by Plato, Aristotle, Horace, Samuel Johnson, and Matthew Arnold. To these scholars, literature is a proper means to impart moral lessons and examine philosophical ideas. When it comes to New Humanism, from 1910 to 1930, there was a movement in the United States. It was called New Humanism. Critics who supported and maneuvered the movement were called New Humanists. Some of the remarkable New Humanists were Paul Elmer More, Irving Babbitt, and Robert Shafer. New Humanists argue: (1) human beings are unique among nature's creatures; (2) the essence of experience is fundamentally moral and ethical; and (3) the human will, although subject to genetic laws and shaped by the environment, is essentially free (Britannica, 2008, para. 1). Thus, New Humanists emphasize human

beings as the best of creations because they, as they put it, have moral power. With this moral power, human beings control their free will and prefer good. With these criteria, New Humanism prefers analyzing literature. More relevantly, as far as our present study is concerned, Paul Elmer More believes that classical English authors like Shakespeare have a very strong stance regarding morality (Domitrovic, 2003).

### **Results and Discussion**

In *Hamlet*, when Claudius and Gertrude are the villains, the former exhibits most of the villainies. When the drama starts, Claudius has already materialized his wish to become the king of Denmark. In retrospect, Claudius did not deserve the kingship either lawfully or morally because his elder brother King Hamlet, whom he dethroned by killing, was a good king and had a son who was to inherit the kingship. With love for queenship and instant erasure of the memory of her good husband from mind, Gertrude happily agreed to marry Claudius, the new king, and the marriage took place. So, when the drama starts, Gertrude is already the queen and wife of Claudius. Thus, especially in Claudius's conduct, there are elements like ingratitude, vulgarity, and chaos. There are also amoral ambitions, amoral means to achieve them, and deceptions. These elements construct the paradigm of villainy for Shakespeare. Interestingly enough, applying the Shakespearean paradigm, the villainies in modernity itself and modern politics can be traced because the villainies of the modern world are the same as those of Claudius and Gertrude in *Hamlet*.

#### **Ingratitude, Vulgarity and Chaos**

In *Hamlet*, King Hamlet's love and care for Queen Gertrude was conspicuously warm and deep. Prince Hamlet authenticates the truth by stating that his father was "so loving to his mother" (Shakespeare, 1992, 1.11.140) and for that reason "he might not between the winds of heaven /Visit her face too roughly" (Shakespeare, 1992, 1.11.141-42). But after the murder of her husband, she seems to feel no pain. Having a "[a] tainted and disloyal mind", she rather agrees to marry Claudius, her late husband's younger brother and the new king (Al-Ghammaz, 2023, p. 320). What is more disappointing for any sensible mind is that she agrees to marry within a very short period of time. Gertrude's gross ingratitude is clearly visible here.

To understand whether Hamlet's madness is real or not, Claudius and Polonius decide to create a situation where the latter's daughter, Ophelia, with whom Hamlet has a love affair, will pretend to come across Hamlet and talk when Claudius and Polonius will eavesdrop. Trying to eavesdrop as two adults talk is really vulgar.

To illegally grab power and remain in it without any threat, Claudius gives birth to a large scale chaos. It is done solely for his sinful thoughts and actions. The chaos

chronicles disturbance in Hamlet's study in Germany as he abruptly returns to Denmark after receiving the news of his father's death, ending in his love affair with Ophelia and the appointment of his childhood friends, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, for having Hamlet killed beyond their knowledge. More horribly, the chaos includes the murder of Polonius by Hamlet, the drowning of Ophelia to death in a stream, and at last the deaths of Hamlet, Laertes (Polonius's son), Gertrude, and Claudius. Everything happens when "fair justice no longer exists" in Denmark (Al-Ghammaz, 2023, p. 322). Thus, there is a colossal chaos that Claudius causes. This chaos was foreshadowed by Hamlet's friend, Horatio, as he told Marcellus, an officer, that "some strange eruption to our state" was in the making (Shakespeare, 1992, 1.1.69).

Thus, Gertrude and Claudius in *Hamlet* exhibit ingratitude, vulgarity, and chaos, which construct the paradigm of villainy for Shakespeare. With the Shakespearean paradigm, we may now investigate what villains are there in modernity.

From the very definition of modernity, which has already been mentioned, we may come to the inference that "Modernity" itself turns problematic and controversial when it is claimed to be a generation's "own technological innovation, governance, and socioeconomics" (Snyder, 2024, para. 1). It is as if the achievements of that generation did not inherit anything from the past. Or, it is as if no environment or context were prepared by the previous generations. So, it is an example of gross ingratitude. Even if, in all regards, a new generation is seemingly ahead of the previous one, actually they are not so. The reason is every generation in its own time enjoys a kind of self-sufficiency in its own context. Accordingly, Adam and Eve, the first man and woman of the earth, were self-sufficient. The demands of mankind and the scopes of their fulfillment have always maintained a constant proportion till today. Here, not realizing the truth, the attitude of modernity is tantamount to vulgarity. Meanwhile, before "Victorians" appear 'old-fashioned to a new generation of "moderns"', it has to be figured out whether or not "Victorians" are really "eminent" (Snyder, 2024, para. 1). The Victorian period (1832-1901) was the culmination of British colonialism, signifying the maximum amount of plunder from its colonies scattered all over the world. So, the figures of the Victorian generation were the beneficiaries of that plunder. Then, how can they be "eminent"? Glorifying the beneficiaries of plunder or plunderers itself is actually vulgar. Notably, the advancement that modernity claims does give rise to chaos, including unnumbered problems. It may even be construed that the ancient period was far better. Lings (1991) opines,

The world of today is a chaos of jostling opinions and aspirations: the so-called "free world" is a fluid chaos; the totalitarian part of the modern world is a rigid chaos. By contrast with both, the ancient world was always an order, that is, a hierarchy of concepts, each at the level that rightly belongs to it. (p.45)

The chaos of modernity has been expressed through two horrific world wars in

the twentieth century. A worldwide climatic disaster is another example of chaos. Even in the field of critiquing literature, theory has lost its standard by being “a commodity” (Christian, 1987, p. 51). In the modern world, “[c]ritics are no longer concerned with literature but with other critics' texts, for the critic yearning for attention has displaced the writer and has conceived of himself as the center” (Christian, 1987, p. 52). So, there is chaos in the field of intellectual practice too. In this chaotic process of the modern world, “science itself,” being void of “the philosophical ideas,” proves to be “the epistemological tyrannies” (Faruque, 2024, p. 15).

When modernity is the social, economic, and political scenarios that have been prevailing as the immediate results of the Industrial Revolution and Enlightenment, modernism is the movement born in its womb in the early twentieth century. The movement has spread into every sector of life from its original domain of culture. Predictably, all unacceptable features of modernity remain in modernism as it declares to enact “a break with the past,” the past that is the reservoir of the myriads of values and principles related to humanity and spirituality (Kuiper, 2024, para. 1).

Thus, modernity, along with modernism of the modern world, inspires one's being ungrateful, vulgar, and chaotic—the elements of the Shakespearean paradigm for villainy. This is how villainy may be located in modernity with the help of Shakespeare.

### **Amoral Ambition and Means**

It is already mentioned that the ambitions that are nurtured, especially by Claudius in *Hamlet*, are amoral ambitions. The amoral ambitions have amoral means to fulfill them. In the drama, Shakespeare vividly portrays the peril of such amoral ambitions and the amoral means to achieve them as they lead individuals to commit acts of injustice and inhuman brutality.

In *Hamlet*, Claudius kills his own brother, King Hamlet, to become the King of Denmark, though the latter has been perfectly ruling the country. Claudius's hunger for power or amoral ambition makes him blind, and thus he commits fratricide. Notably, King Hamlet has never suspected his younger brother Claudius as someone who is greedy for power. But that unsuspecting, honest, and innocent king has been killed by Claudius himself. Moreover, it has not been a normal killing. King Hamlet has been killed with poison inserted into his ears when he is asleep. So, it is severely inhuman. After killing his brother, Claudius does not delay marrying Gertrude, the widowed wife of his late brother. Thus, while having the kingdom, he also possesses the queen so that his newly acquired kingship is further strengthened. But, as he finds Prince Hamlet as a threat to his kingship, the former makes a plan to have the latter killed at the hands of the English King. Thus, after fulfilling his amoral ambition of ascending the throne by following the amoral means of committing fratricide, Claudius tries to remain in royal position, applying a most amoral and evil strategy. But in a soliloquy, though after Prince

Hamlet's clarification to Claudius about the former's discovery of the identity of King Hamlet's murderer, Claudius does feel inward remorse. Claudius says, "Is there not rain enough in the sweet heavens to wash it white as snow?" (Shakespeare, 1992, 3.3.45-46).

With failure in his first attempt to have Prince Hamlet killed, Claudius makes another attempt. He arranges a combat between Hamlet and Laertes. Here Claudius takes the opportunity of the emerging hostility between the two. Prior to the fight, he mixes the point of Laertes's sword with poison and also keeps a glass of poisoned wine for Hamlet with the plan that if the poisoned sword cannot succeed, the poisoned wine surely will. But Gertrude unknowingly drinks the poisoned wine and dies. Laertes's sword wounds Hamlet, and, afterwards, the swords get exchanged, and, with Laertes's poisoned sword, Hamlet wounds Laertes. By this time, Hamlet comes to know about the wine and swordpoint's being poisoned. He realizes it has been done by Claudius. Instantly, he wounds Claudius with the poisoned sword. Then, before being forced by Hamlet to drink the poisoned wine, Claudius shouts for help by saying, "O, yet defend me, friends. I am but hurt" (5.2.303). But nobody comes to help him. He dies a miserable and ignominious death. Thus, Shakespeare confirms that the villain of Hamlet is Claudius. His villainy consists of amoral ambition and amoral ways of its fulfillment. The amoral ways even turn inhuman.

With regard to Gertrude, what is clear is that she prefers remaining close to power by being the queen of the country. But when her husband, King Hamlet, is already a chapter of the past, being killed by Claudius, she does not miss the scope of remaining in her former position of queenship by accepting the marriage proposal of Claudius, the new king. Here her action is both unlawful and amoral because Claudius's kingship itself is unlawful and amoral.

In *Hamlet*, with their amoral ambitions, and ruthless means to achieve them, Claudius and Gertrude exhibit villainies in the Shakespearean paradigm. With this same paradigm, villainies may be located in the modern politics of the twentieth and twenty first centuries.

Here we would like to focus on the politics prevalent in the USA because, at present, this country is the most powerful and influential among all in all regards. The US political leaders, both of the Republican Party and the Democratic Party, do campaigns to win presidential elections every four years. This ambition itself is amoral because no party has ever held any goal to change the capitalist and the resultant hedonic and human-reluctant social structure of the country. The capitalist social structure of the USA, as it is in other modern capitalist countries of the West, even receives academic support. In the USA, "universities are eager to pursue skills and excellence at the expense of ethical formation (i.e., to form a complete human being through moral and intellectual training)" (Faruque, 2024, p. 2). But no US political party has ever held any agenda to change it. As capitalism's core issue is laissez-faire, or "Do as you like," obstacles are created in its



way by family and society, the two reservoir institutions of morality and humanity. So, a capitalist country directly or indirectly causes the two institutions to be extinct. Then, only individuals remain to do their direct interactions with the state. But when conventionally a state's dealings with an individual are bound to be related solely to his external affairs, a capitalist state with concomitant materialism is more external with no care for morality and humanity that are internal to an individual, which his family and society would take care of. So, in the capitalist social structure of a country, individuals suffer amidst plenty of materialistic fulfillments. The USA is such a country. With no intention to change the pseudo-pathetic scenario of the country, no matter how democratically they try to go to power, the ambition of the US politicians inside their country is undoubtedly amoral.

To fulfill the amoral ambition, means are also amoral. To cite an example, the presidential election of the USA may be concentrated on. Bill Clinton, who was the US President from 1993 to 2001, is deemed "the first President to champion gay rights" (Socorides, 2013, para. 3). During his election campaign in 1992, he uttered his support for the hitherto rejected same sex marriage and declared, "I have a vision and you're a part of it. I believe we're all a part of the same community and we'd better start behaving as if we are" (Socorides, 2013, para. 6). Afterwards, in 2015, same sex marriage received full legal endorsement. The permission "finally arrived on June 26, 2015, with the Supreme Court decision" (The Journey, n.d., para. 5). The unnatural and basest same sex marriage received legal approval. Actually, physical relationships among people of the same sex are nonexistent even among non-rational animals, birds, and insects. Thus, this perverted relationship makes people inferior to non-rational creatures. But the Democratic Party of the USA, with the goal of winning an election to have Clinton as President, advocated same sex marriage. At any cost, without least care for morality and humanity, the party tried to grab the power of the country, and they did.

Donald Trump was the US President from 2017 to 2021. He belonged to the Republican Party. As long as Trump was the President, Stephen Miller was "widely considered the president's most ideologically extreme and bureaucratically effective adviser" (Clark, 2020, para. 2). During Trump's election campaign, Miller "advocated many of the most extreme white supremacist concepts" (Clark, 2020, para. 2). White Supremacy is actually white terrorism, which Western media do not recognize and camouflage by using the euphemism "White Supremacy." This white terrorism even prompted a police officer to kill a black man, George Floyd, in brought day light in the most horrific way possible in 2020. It was "[a] chokehold killing" done in cold blood, and when it was being done, the black man implored, uttering his last words, "I can't breathe" (Okri, 2020, para. 2). It was the time of corona pandemic and "[t]he phrase linked the coronavirus with the ubiquitous and implacable nature of institutional racism" (Okri, 2020, para. 2). The killing of Floyd is simply one example of the millions of acts

of brutality the white terrorists have been exhibiting for centuries, especially across the USA. But Trump's Republican Party was promoting it through influential figures like Miller to win the election to have a Republican President, with no care for humanity. Clearly, the Republican Party was applying amoral means to fulfill amoral ambition.

So, we have seen what the two major US political parties do inside their country to go to power. Interestingly, they do the same thing in the whole world to maintain their "unrivaled" military supremacy at present, having the western countries as their ally (Huntington, 1993, p. 39). In this regard, for military and economic supremacy, what they do on other continents is really very heart-rending. While Arab countries are resourceful in oil resources and Muslim in religion, the USA-Europe ally sees two-fold need: to harvest crafty and forceful benefit from the oil resources and to suppress the anti-capitalist, anti-modern, and anti-hedonic emergence of Islamic politics in the region. The need is the postcolonial need of dominance held by the ally. To fulfill the need, as the representative of the ally, Britain established the state of Israel, occupying a portion of Palestine on May 14, 1948. On the same day, the then US President, Harry S. Truman, gave well-orchestrated recognition to it. Thus, the prominent Jewish-Christian hostility was converted into prominent Jewish-Muslim hostility. At this stage of world history in the 21st century, wherever wars, including Israeli occupation of Palestine and genocide on Gaza, are taking place, they are actually due to the postcolonial objectives of dominance held by the USA and their western ally.

After Hamas, the group of Palestinian freedom fighters, attacked colonizer Israel on 7 October 2023, mainly targeting Israeli army bases and killing 1139 Israeli soldiers and civilians, Israel started invading Gaza (one year, 2024). Hasan (2024) writes, "As of June 2024, Israel has killed about forty thousand Palestinians (most of whom are children and women) and destroyed almost all educational institutions, health care facilities, and arable land" in Gaza (p. 9). Hasan (2024) also writes, "The gruesome images of slaughtered and maimed genocide victims emerging from Gaza are simply unbearable" (p. 9). Notably, in a report, a high UN official has recently acknowledged Israel's ongoing invasion and atrocities in Gaza, Palestine, as genocide. The UN Special Rapporteur on the occupied Palestinian territories, Francesca Albanese, says, "[T]here are clear indications that Israel has violated three of the five acts listed under the UN Genocide Convention" (UN expert, 2024, para. 2). Actually, it is "a full-blown genocide," which the UN cannot admit being influenced by the USA (Hasan, 2024, p. 12). However, it is hardly one month after the UN's finding of Israeli genocide in Gaza when the present US President, Biden, declares a very large scale funding for Israel besides Ukraine and Taiwan. A report states, "US President Joe Biden has signed into law a \$94 billion foreign funding bill that includes military aid to Israel, Ukraine, and Taiwan" (Biden signs, 2024, para. 1).

While the USA and the West have been using the term "terrorist" in a wider

perspective, targeting chiefly Muslims since the 9/11 Twin Tower attack in 2001, Chomsky points finger at the US project of terrorist activities, which came to be horrifically sophisticated just at the start of the 21st century but had been enacted even before the Twin Tower attack. Here the sophisticated homicidal US project is concentrated on not forgetting the country's unprecedented and genocidal atom bomb attack during World War II and the Napalm bomb attack during the Vietnam War. However, Chomsky talks about the controversial drone project during the presidential period of Barak Obama from 2009 to 2017. Just in 2018, as feared by many, there was the execution or occurrence of one of the many secret killing missions with those drones. It was the attack on Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro. A news report writes, "A drone loaded with explosives detonated near a military event where Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro was giving a speech, but he escaped unharmed in what the embattled leader called an assassination attempt" (Venezuela's Nicolas, 2018, para. 1). Chomsky (2014) rightly comments by saying, "The drone campaign is a global terrorism campaign run by the Obama administration" (para. 19). The USA and its allies do it to maintain their supreme position in the world, an amoral ambition that they continue to fulfill in a most amoral and inhuman way.

Relevantly enough, to Machiavelli, "to think of political behavior in moral terms would be to expose oneself to all the dangers that clever opponents could create" (Stumpf, 1998, p. 196). In the same way, especially the US politicians do not think of politics at home and abroad "in moral terms." The US spent an amount of \$816.7 billion in its defense sector in fiscal 2023, with an aim to remain on top in terms of military power among all the countries (Garamone, 2022). Here, as the USA declares that it spends the amount on defense, it is ironical because the country is always in offensive mode, perhaps with its reliance upon the principle that offence is the best defense. For its control of the world, it chooses to strike panic, not convey love, because the USA perhaps believes in the Machiavellian viewpoint that "... if you have to make a choice, to be feared is much safer than to be loved" (Machiavelli, 1992, p. 46). This is how, through amoral means, the USA, having its western ally beside them, wants to maintain its supreme position globally, the supreme position that the country achieved in an amoral way when it dropped atom bombs on Japan in World War II.

Retrospectively, the West was amoral and inhuman too when they were the unchallenged colonial power all over the world before 1947. Its reflection we see when the colonizers, besides exerting military and other forms of superiority over the colonized, would write literature with the same purpose. The literature was called colonialist literature. To Janmohamed (1995), "Colonialist literature is an exploration and a representation of a world at the boundaries of 'civilization,' a world that has not [yet] been domesticated by European signification or codified in detail by its ideology" (p. 18). Thus, the colonial west was diabolically inhuman in maneuvering the literature. But in

that literature, as the colonizers would also showcase their moral superiority, it paradoxically spoilt the vitality of the literature. To Janmohamed (1995), “[T]he assumption of moral superiority subverts the very potential of colonialist literature” (p. 18). Actually, colonizers, by deeming the colonized as other, would aim at the complete destruction of the indigenous strengths. What the colonialist did was “he [would destroy] without any significant qualms the effectiveness of indigenous economic, social, political, legal, and moral systems and imposes his own versions of structures on the other” (Janmohamed, 1995, p. 20).

After colonialist literature, postcolonial literature arrives. But the amoral and inhuman treatments of the Euro-colonizers reflected in colonialist literature remain a legacy or reality in postcolonial literature. Notably, postcolonial literature is mostly interpreted as literary pieces written by the writers of the former colonies. In this literature, inherent is postcolonialism. Notably, “Postcolonialism often also involves the discussion of experiences such as slavery, migration, suppression and resistance, difference, race, gender, and place, as well as responses to the discourses of imperial Europe such as history, philosophy, anthropology, and linguistics” (Quayson, 2020, para. 2). This is the legacy or reality the colonized have to bear or experience due to Eurovillainies or the amoral and inhuman Euro-hegemonies.

But postcolonial theorists exhibit a fatal flaw in terms of including ongoing world situations into their critical viewpoint. About the theorists, Hasan (2024) writes,

[They] are sunk in the scholastic quagmire of discussing past colonial atrocities. As their minds have progressively slipped into the past, they find it convenient to navigate the nineteenth-century colonial world and are disinclined to discuss comparable crimes and cruelties that are happening in our contemporary world (p.8).

The theorists do not highlight how “the ever-aggressive and dominant Euro-American economy and culture,” in addition to their effort to maintain military superiority, cause visible and invisible disasters across the world in postcolonial a setting (Uddin, 2015, p. 99). If at all they are inclined about the contemporary world, they give an opposite interpretation of self-evident truth. To cite an example, Rushdie, a well-known postcolonial writer, comments on Hamas, the Palestinian freedom fighters, as “Taliban like” (as cited in Hasan, 2024, p. 12). Here Rushdie wishes to demean Hamas. To do it, he brings the comparison of Talibans in Afghanistan. But, again, Talibans are freedom fighters too. Disappointingly enough, Rushdie, despite being a postcolonial writer and critic, resembles the west in his stance about Hamas and Talibans. Therefore, quite sensibly, “It may act as fuel to fire for the idea of decoloni[z]ing postcolonialism” (Hasan, 2024, p. 14). Thus, by any means, intellectual indifference to or advocacy of the western villainies in the twentieth and twenty first centuries, as done by the postcolonial writers and critics, is apparent. This scenario may be considered as enacted by modern

politics evaded by modern intellectuals. By doing so, they become a part of the villainy.

Shakespeare, in *Hamlet*, designs the story for Claudius and Gertrude in a way where, especially the villainy of the former amounts to causing murders and disasters of wider magnitude, though he himself, together with Gertrude, dies a miserable death. The good characters – Prince Hamlet and his beloved Ophelia – die in a miserable way too, but these deaths arouse pity, even a complaint against Shakespeare for discouraging virtue. Readers feel deeply sad for them. But they heave sighs of relief as characters with amoral ambitions and means – Claudius and Gertrude - die. So, Shakespeare reveals that he is opposed to amoral ambitions and their amoral means. This stance may be deemed as to constitute one of the Shakespearean paradigms of villainy. Interestingly, if the politics of the contemporary modern world is analyzed by applying the Shakespearean paradigm, villainy may be located in the politics of the USA and its western ally as they nurture amoral ambitions and fulfill them through amoral means both locally and globally. Similar was the villainy of Russia before the ending of the Cold War in 1989. At present, China is trying to be a competitor of the USA. India is administering the villainy in the South Asian region by disturbing smaller countries in its neighborhood.

### Deceptions

In *Hamlet*, Claudius kills his brother King Hamlet. But he pretends as if he were a man with unalloyed honesty and sincerity. He pretends to have a profound feeling for his sorrowful nephew, Prince Hamlet. He appeals to Hamlet to overcome his grief and look upon him as his father. He says, “We pray you throw to earth/ This unprevailing woe, and think of us/As of a father.” (Shakespeare, 1992, 1.2.106-108)

While showing this smiling face and uttering cordial words for Hamlet, inwardly he attempts twice to have Hamlet killed. Again, he tries to camouflage his strategic marriage with Gertrude, which, to make the issue more controversial, takes place in an unnatural haste just after the murder of King Hamlet. He says after “our dear brother’s death” (1.2.1), “[t]he memory” is still “green” (1.2.2), “discretion fought with nature” (1.2.5) and “[w]ith mirth in funeral, and with dirge in marriage” (1.2.12), he has married Gertrude. This deception and pretention, to Polonius, amount to giving a beautiful face to the devil himself. Polonius says, “Tis too much proved, that with devotion’s visage/ And pious action we do sugar o’er/ The devil himself” (Shakespeare, 1992, 3.1.47-49).

In response to this comment, Claudius does confess in an aside that he makes use of “[his] most painted words” to deceive others (3.1.53). Claudius maintains his deception till the end. We may look at such a situation. Towards the end of the drama, Gertrude is dying by unknowingly drinking the poisoned wine that Claudius keeps for Hamlet, and the latter, while fighting with Laertes, eagerly asks Claudius what has happened to the queen. Then, Claudius, in order to fulfill his scheme of killing Hamlet, lies by saying, “She swoons to see them [Hamlet and Laertes] bleed” (5.2.288). However,

Claudius's enchanting power of camouflaging rhetoric in many situations of mounting mental pressure is noteworthy, signifying that in society, evil characters almost commonly possess the power of beguiling rhetoric for the purpose of their deceptions.

Gertrude is somehow able to have the clear understanding that Claudius killed her husband; still, she has married the killer only to remain as the queen. Hiding this truth, like Claudius, she too wishes that Prince Hamlet and others will believe what has been circulated about the death of the previous king, that is, his death resulted from the biting of a poisonous snake. So, Gertrude wishes that Hamlet's madness must not center around the death of King Hamlet, lest he should find out Claudius as the killer and herself as his wife with tacit support to the murder. With this mindset, she says to Ophelia,

And for your part, Ophelia, I do wish  
That your good beauties be the happy cause  
Of Hamlet's wildness. So shall I hope your virtues  
Will bring him to his wonted way again,  
To both your honors. (Shakespeare, 1992, 3.1.38-42).

Gertrude's hope is that the love of Ophelia should be the reason for Hamlet's madness. Thus, she wishes to continue her deception and pretension as a flawless well-wisher for everyone, including Prince Hamlet. In the latter half of her utterance to Ophelia, Gertrude advises Ophelia to make use of her virtue to normalize the mental imbalance of Hamlet. Here a question arises: Was she virtuous in her love with the late king? Wasn't she a lady who was in love only with his position, not with the person himself, which her hasty second marriage in a normal disposition proves? The answers to these questions clearly indicate that she is not at all virtuous when it comes to her fascination for queenship. But she is pretending as if she were virtuous and thus advises Ophelia. This is deception administered in a very subtle way.

Thus, the deceptive utterances and actions of Claudius and Gertrude in *Hamlet* are noteworthy. They maintain a facade of benevolence while pursuing their own interests ruthlessly. With such deceptions, they construct yet another Shakespearean paradigm of villainy.

In contemporary modern politics, deceptions are evident among the modern leaders. They perhaps maintain Machiavellian principles of deception. According to Machiavellian doctrine, leaders are permitted to adopt pragmatic strategies of amoral nature both in the cases of going to power and remaining in it. The strategies approve of manipulation, deception, treachery, and the like, which Machiavelli's seminal work, *The Prince*, upholds. Machiavelli says, "[O]nly the shrewdest and most crafty individuals could survive in the precarious art of governing" (Stumpf, 1998, p. 196). To Machiavelli, '... it is not necessary for the ruler to have all the virtues, "it is very necessary to seem to have them"' (Stumpf, 1998, p. 197).

In the modern world, especially the USA and the Western countries, apply deceptions in their dealings with the rest of the world. As an example, when it comes to democracy, the USA and the West pretend to be the supporters of democracy all over the world. This is one of many deceitful actions they are taking. Actually, they support democracy in some countries, but autocracy or oligarchy under different names in others, depending on the convenience of their own interests. Mohammed Morsi, the first president of Egypt to have been elected democratically, was ousted by military intervention (Egypt's Mohamed Morsi, 2019). In this ousting, Washington secretly funded the opposition parties. An *Al-Jazeera* report states,

...with indirect support of the USA, a review of dozens of US federal government documents shows Washington has quietly funded senior Egyptian opposition figures who called for toppling of the country's now-deposed president Mohamed Morsi. (Mekay, 2013, para. 2)

Morsi was jailed, tried, and died in courtroom. Now the USA continues to support the military government of Sisi in Egypt. But to the then US President Barak Obama, the Libyan President, Muammar Qaddafi, was "a tyrant" for disallowing democracy (Libya: US, 2011, para. 8). With this allegation, Libya was attacked in 2011 by the USA, UK, and France. Later in the same year, in "[a] Western-backed armed uprising," Qaddafi met with "[an] inhumane assassination" (Zoubir, 2020, para. 1). Prior to that, the UN had permitted the USA, Britain, and France to take "unprecedented action" against Libya, as "Western domination of the U.N. Security Council and its decisions, tempered only by occasional abstention by China" is a commonplace affair (Huntington, 1993, p. 40). While playing the key role, it is the USA, not the code of justice, which decides who is guilty and criminal and who is not, and accordingly, who is to be ousted and killed and who is not. As the same process continued during the presidential period of Barak Obama (2009-2017), Chomsky (2014) expressed his observation by stating,

By now, guilty means that Obama decided on Tuesday morning to kill you. That's the definition of guilty. On Tuesday morning there are these sessions in the White House where they read a little St. Augustine on just wars and then decide who we're going to murder today. They're recognized to be suspects. It is massive and spread across large parts of the world. (para. 21)

This is how the US Presidents seemingly uphold people's right to vote through democracy, but actually it is their deception. They mainly uphold the interests of their politics, economy, and ego.

By having both Claudius and Gertrude of *Hamlet* punished and killed in a miserable way, Shakespeare reveals his opposition to deceit. These deceptions too establish the Shakespearean paradigm of villainy. To maintain the same Shakespearean paradigm, modern politics, especially that of the USA, also exhibits villainy.

### Conclusion

To conclude, the clear idea that comes to the forefront is that Shakespeare constructs his paradigm of villainy through Claudius and Gertrude in *Hamlet*. The paradigm consists of ingratitude, vulgarity, chaos, amoral ambitions and their amoral means, and deceptions. Using the same paradigm, villainies have been located in modernity itself and modern politics. The findings may help readers and researchers to be aware of and knowledgeable about Shakespeare's viewpoint regarding the nature of villainy that men with negative traits nurture. Besides, the findings may contribute to enlightening readers and researchers by helping them to identify what domains of the modern world may be called villainy. Thus, enlightened readers and researchers may initiate the process of substituting the modern civilization with a human-friendly one.

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