



广东外语外贸大学

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# 2002届 优秀毕业生论文集

# 广东外语外贸大学

## 2002 年优秀毕业生论文集

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# 目 录

## 英语语言文化学院

Macbeth: A Tragedy of Contradiction.....	黄 聪 (1)
The Negative Effects of the Commercialization of Modern Media.....	张 曼 (10)
Comprehension Improvement in English-Chinese Consecutive Interpreting Training.....	黎小燕 (17)
Insidious Threat: America's Abridged Press Freedom in Wartime.....	李秀玉 (28)
EcotourismA---New Trend in America.....	吴晓雯 (37)
Mirror of the Soul---Herbert A. Giles' Translation of Ancient Chinese Poems.....	张 昀 (43)

## 国际商务英语学院

A Promising Project or a 'Great Leap Westward'-Focusing on Go-West financing Issues...	霍楚雯 (53)
How Can Chinese Banks Meet the Challenges of WTO Accession? .....	麦淑华 (64)
Some Thoughts on Corporate Culture----Its concept, importance and implications.....	兰 洁 (74)
Capital Restructuring of China's 'Big Four' Commercial Banks.....	谭海鸣 (87)

## 西方语言文化学院

Förderung der Werbeziele durch Werbedarsteller am Beispiel der chinesischen und deutschen Fernsehwerbung.....	周志雄 (95)
REGARD SUR L'EVALUATION DE LA QUALITE EN INTERPRETATION.....	曾洁仪 (110)
REFLEXIÓN SOBRE LOS VERBOS TRANSITIVOS E INTRANSITIVOS.....	刘园婷 (121)

## 东方语言文化学院

中国のOEMブームについての考察.....	唐明芬 (128)
同時性を示す「とたん(に)」、「や否や」、「なり」の異同について.....	张敏生 (137)

## 国际经济贸易学院

反倾销的贸易保护性及中国如何迎接反倾销的挑战.....	刘 颖 (147)
-----------------------------	-----------

入世对中国电信业的影响及其对策.....郑 嵘（154）

我国城乡居民储蓄存款增量的计量分析.....孙 程（160）

中国开放式基金发展现状及对策研究.....彭金彪（168）

中国入世后的引资体制改革.....何 娅（177）

**国际工商管理学院**

企业生命周期与管理者性格的匹配.....蒋国页（186）

打造核心竞争力——中国连锁超市如何应对跨国公司挑战.....严 敏（199）

关于上市公司信息披露问题的研究.....阮永曦（211）

WTO 下中外银行竞争力分析及我国业内分析.....杨慧焱（219）

**法学院**

加入 WTO 对我国行政许可的影响.....姚 亮（228）

# Macbeth: A Tragedy of Contradiction

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**Abstract:** This thesis is to explore how Shakespeare exhibited in *Macbeth*, one of his four principal tragedies, the contradiction between the elements of two opposite natures that coexist in one common entity. One of Shakespeare's major theories about human life is that it is in itself contradictory. Through exhibiting the coexistence of or the conflict between different pairs of contradictory elements, such as Good and Evil, masculinity and femininity, ease and tension, happiness and sadness, pretense and genuine feeling, auspices and ominous messages, etc., the playwright thoroughly illustrated this theory and revealed to people the universality of the contradiction in our world.

Part I is a brief introduction to the play and its distinctiveness, emphasizing on the unique exhibition of contradictory elements. Part II examines the contradiction through the analysis of the two protagonists, namely, the Macbeths. Part III analyzes the contradiction evident in the setting and plot. Part IV explores the contradiction in some of the utterances. Part V concludes by highlighting the significance of the contradiction in the play, as well as the playwright's theory of the universality of the contradiction.

## I. Introduction

*Macbeth* has something unusual that sets it apart from *Hamlet*, *King Lear* and *Othello*, the other three principal tragedies of William Shakespeare (1564-1616). In a broader sense, this somber play, which tells the story of a Scottish general who assassinates the king and thereafter pays the debt spiritually and earthly, is often credited as the great playwright's most distinctive work. It is his shortest drama, so short that people used to suspect it was an abbreviated version of a much longer play; it is his darkest production, which presents grotesque images, horrifying scenes or acts of killing from end to end; no other Shakespeare's play digs so deep into the human mind and reaches so far in the exploration of human psychology as *Macbeth* does. Its reputation as one of the greatest Shakespearian tragedies owes a lot to its distinctiveness.

The distinctive features of *Macbeth* are not limited to the aforementioned aspects. Observed from a philosophical perspective, it is a unique exhibition of the contradiction between the elements of two opposite natures that coexist in one common entity. As Hazlitt puts it, "*Macbeth* is done upon a stronger and more systematic principle of contrast than any other of Shakespeare's plays" (19). Striking contrast is formed between different pairs of coexisting yet contradictory

elements; the contrast contributes significantly to the brilliant portrayal of the characters, as well as the outstanding dramatic effects of the play, and it ultimately serves for one purpose: the revelation of the universality of contradiction, a concept about human life that Shakespeare illustrated so thoroughly only in *Macbeth*.

## **II. The Contradiction Exhibited In the Protagonists**

### **A. The Contradiction in Macbeth: Conflict Between Good and Evil**

The conflict between Good and Evil is one of the earliest themes of literature, and also an everlasting one. In *Macbeth*, Shakespeare used it as a major subject in exhibiting the contradiction between two coexisting elements in human personality. Never is there any conclusion whether Macbeth is a good man or an evil man, since he represents a combination of Good and Evil. The development of the conflict between his two contradictory natures exerts a decisive influence on the his thinking, feeling and doing, and thereby acts as a key factor in determining his fate.

The coexistence of Good and Evil in Macbeth's personality is revealed at a very early stage of the play. Despite the fact that before Macbeth's first entrance he is described as a courageous warrior loyal to his king, we can infer from his reaction to the prophecy of the Weird Sisters that he has the innate propensity to evil. Once he hears the Weird Sisters' words that he will assume the throne of Scotland, he starts, and sinks in his own thought. Dowden quoted Hudson as saying that it is a total revelation of his criminal aptitude that startles and surprises him into a state of meditation (in Campbell, 134). This evil aptitude of his is not, and can not be formed out of nothing instantly as he hears the prophecy on the heath; rather, it is a part of his inborn nature. The Weird Sisters do not put evil desire into his mind, they just stir it up and make him realize its existence. As Goddard remarks, "The hero has already been tempted before the opening of the action" (497).

At the same time when Macbeth's evil nature is betrayed, the conflict between Good and Evil in his inner world begins. The fear that Macbeth apparently shows is the result of the initial clash between his moral sense and his formerly latent but now perceptible immorality. Why is a killing machine like Macbeth so troubled by his own imagination of killing? Because he, or rather, the good part of his personality, is deeply shocked at discovering a contradictory part of himself. It is a potential power that can be strong enough to stimulate an unprecedented psychological upheaval, in which all his established norms and concepts would be shattered, and the proud loyal Macbeth would be overrun by an evil usurper. At this stage, however, though the conflict in his inner world has begun, his good nature still maintains the leading position. The reason is that Macbeth feels there is not yet the need to let his evil nature bidding open defiance to the good, and he consequently decides that he'd better not take any rash action, but just wait and see how his career will go by destiny.

When Malcolm is entitled by Duncan as the "The Prince of Cumberland", who will succeed to the throne of Scotland, and thereby becomes an obstacle on Macbeth's way towards a

magnificent future, Macbeth feels the urgent necessity to master the course of his own life. As a result, his evil nature floats up to the surface of his consciousness, and declares war against his moral conception. The conflict between Good and Evil inside him escalates to a new level, and the man is agonized by realizing this. In a contradictory speech, he manifests his intention to seize the throne by illegitimate means, yet at the same time admits that his desire is “black and deep” (I. iv. 51)\*. The contradiction in his mind is highlighted in the famous soliloquy, “If it were done when ‘tis done, ...” (I. vii. 1-28). In this speech there seems as if two Macbeths were arguing. Each of them endeavors to give explicit expression to his thought, and exerts himself in vain to persuade the other. The soliloquy creates an extremely tense atmosphere, and a breathe-taking moment when neither Good nor Evil would budge an inch and has any advantage over its opponent.

Then comes the seesaw battle between Macbeth’s two contradictory natures. The starting point is the instigation of his wife, Lady Macbeth, who successfully helps the evil Macbeth overtake the good one. Although on his way to Duncan’s bedroom, Macbeth’s conscience warns him of the horrible consequence through the hallucination of a bloody knife, his burning evil desire at the moment is too strong to be curbed, and the man goes on to complete the murder. In the aftermath of the assassination, however, being stung by seeing Duncan’s bloody corpse, Macbeth’s moral sense revives and regains its strength. The murderer suffers bitterly from his self-condemnation which nearly deranges him. The mysterious voice he hears that cries “Sleep no more!” (II. ii. 35) is indeed the voice of his Good. It is informing him that he, as a man that has conscience, will henceforward be deprived of the right to sleep by bearing the memory of his evil doing. His imagination of a blood-incarnadined sea represents his deep repentance for murdering a good king, who treats him as the most trustworthy right-hand man. Unfortunately, the revival of his conscience does not last long. When the murder is disclosed, out of the need to protect himself, the man allows his Evil fights back and gradually draws him into a vicious circle, in which he believes that the only way to conceal his crime of murder and preserve its fruit is to murder more. Macbeth’s Good is severely weakened, so weakened that before the assassination of Banquo, it only has the strength to envy the peace enjoyed by the dead Duncan. After his second interview with the Weird Sisters, Macbeth decides to kill anyone that could be a menace to him. His two contradictory natures from then on swap their positions. The Evil now represents him. In the eyes of the Scottish noblemen, Macbeth the hero has degenerated into Macbeth the tyrant.

Indeed Macbeth’s good nature never really dies until it perishes together with its contradictory counterpart. Grimly, Macbeth grumbles about his sufferings, comparing his life to a withered “yellow leaf” and sighing that “honor, love, obedience, troops of friends” (V. iii. 23-25) will never be his possessions. In the famous soliloquy “To-morrow, and to-morrow, and

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\* All quotations from the play are taken from Campbell, Oscar J., et al. eds. Macbeth by William Shakespeare. New York: Bantam Books, Inc., 1961.

to-morrow,..." (V. v. 19-28), he defines human life in a most bleak and hopeless way. These gloomy lines reveal that, although his evil nature is still spurring him to fight valiantly against all his enemies, his good nature is already prepared for a doomsday. Now it is his Evil that is troubled by fear, the fear of the Good's willingness to end in destruction. Hence the wicked Macbeth desperately defends himself by killing more and more. Yet the killing machine can eliminate anyone except the good nature in his own heart, which is apparently betrayed when he manifests to Macduff his woeful regret of exterminating the nobleman's family. Finally, being tired of living in ceaseless inner conflict, Macbeth chooses to die in a way honored in his time --- to die in battle.

In depicting Macbeth, Shakespeare was also depicting a cruel war of contradiction going on in the man's inner world. Every decision the character makes is the result of a battle between his two contradictory natures, and every action he takes is impeded to some extent by his hesitation resulting from his inner struggle. His sufferings, be it fear, regret, anger, or hopelessness, are the painful experiences of one side of his personality that hates to witness what the other side has done. "It is not Macbeth's death at the hands of Macduff that makes the play a tragedy, but his destruction in his own nature" (Alexander, 171). This inner destruction is brought about by the severe conflict between Good and Evil, elements of two contradictory natures that coexist in his personality.

## **B. The Contradiction in Lady Macbeth: Conflict Between Masculinity and Femininity**

Lady Macbeth is a classic female stage character well-known, or notorious, for her masculinity. Most critics pay their attention mainly to her firm will and tough mind when they study the character. For instance, Hazlitt defines her as a woman "whose obdurate strength of will and masculine firmness gives her the ascendancy over her husband's faltering virtue" (14). However, masculinity is just one side of her personality, apart from which there is a contradictory side, her innate and inescapable female frailty. Through depicting the conflict between these two elements, Shakespeare again exhibited the contradiction in human personality, which has a crucial bearing on the character's words, deeds, as well as her tragic ending.

Ever since Lady Macbeth makes her first appearance in the play, the coexistence of her male and female qualities are displayed. In her first soliloquy (I. v. 1-28), her ambition, which is too great for a woman, is clearly demonstrated; yet the last few lines of the same speech, such as "That I may pour my spirits in thine ear" (I. v. 27), imply that she will merely act as an instigator and an assistant to her husband in the scheme of murder, but not carry it out by herself. Later in the play she appeals to the force of evil, "Come, you spirits / That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here" (I. v. 41-42). This soliloquy is generally taken as a classic statement of "female masculinity" in literature. Taking a closer and careful look, we can discover that her female frailty is also shown between these lines. Gupta comments the speech is a confession that this hard-minded, cool-headed woman cannot truly overcome her scruples by herself, but has to ask for the help of evil spirits. (67) Unable to take real manly action, she wishes that the "murdering



ministers" (I. v. 49) could help her get rid of her female instinct. Similarly, when she claims the wine she drinks "has made me bold" (II. ii. 1), she is admitting the fact that to get the guts for performing the evil deed, the assistance of alcohol is necessary. Many of her lines apparently show her masculinity on the surface, and at the same time they also reveal her inborn femininity that she can never truly shake off.

The conflict between her manly boldness and her female frailty begins in the aftermath of the murder of Duncan. Though she tries to pacify her husband by saying, "These deeds must not be thought / After these ways" (II. ii. 33-34), her subsequent words "so, it will make us mad" (II. ii. 34) discloses the turmoil ranging in her mind. The masculine side in the woman is pressing her to behave firmly and resolutely so as to successfully implement the whole scheme. Meanwhile she seems to be well aware that, a woman as she is, she could hardly suppress the horror of bearing the guilt of a murder so that she might very probably end up in madness. The woman can be bold enough to smear the two chamberlains with Duncan's blood on her own, and says afterwards, "A little water clears us of this deed: / How easy is it then" (II. ii. 68). Ironically, when in the end she fails to shoulder the tremendous pressure of her sense of guilt and thereby goes mad, she rubs her hands again and again, and sighs in deep anguish, "all the perfumes / of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand" (V. i. 57-58). In the sleepwalking scene, she betrays both sides of her personality in a rather extreme manner. Her fierce reproof on her husband's fear is interspersed by her horror-struck exclamation about blood. Finally, unable to resolve the conflict between her masculinity and her femininity, she gave it a temporary pause by murmuring some pacifying words, which are said literally to her husband but indeed to herself: "What's / done cannot be undone: to bed, to bed, to bed." (V. i. 75-76). The woman's sleepwalking reoccurs night after night, and torments her till she eventually commits suicide.

The direct course of Lady Macbeth's death is her madness. Yet at the root of her destruction lies the severe conflict between two contradictory parts of her personality. Her masculine will keeps pushing her to act boldly and resolutely, but her inborn female nature is too frail to bear the enormous stress of the sense of guilt and insecurity, so that she suffers a mental break-down. The contradiction in her inner world can be detected in almost every speech of hers, and it leads her gradually to a pitiful ending. By portraying the masculinity and femininity of Lady Macbeth, Shakespeare again exhibited the contradiction between two coexisting elements in human personality, as well as its power in shaping people's fate.

### III. The Contradiction Exhibited in the Setting and Plot

#### A. Coexistence of Tension and Ease

Creating a scene in which tension and ease, two contradictory kinds of atmosphere, coexist with each other is another way in which Shakespeare exhibited the contradiction in *Macbeth*. Between tension and ease there is no fierce conflict like that in human personality, yet the contrast formed between them is no less striking simply because these two contradictory elements are

presented simultaneously. The coexistence of tension and ease in the play helps to bring out the powerful dramatic effects of two famous scenes.

The first is the scene in which Lady Macbeth welcomes Duncan and the noblemen of Scotland before Macbeth's castle. Here tension and ease set each other off and produce a double impact on the audiences' minds. The scene is a transitional one prior to one of the climaxes of the play: the conspiracy of the Macbeths. In this scene about welcoming guests, Lady Macbeth's words and deeds are certainly vile pretenses, as her genuine evil intent has already been disclosed previously. In the eyes of the audiences, who still remember her earlier remark, "The raven himself is hoarse / That croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan / Under my battlements" (I. v. 39-41), her extravagant compliment to the king is highly crafty and evil, and represents an imminent danger to Duncan's life. On the surface, nevertheless, the atmosphere is tranquil and even auspicious. The scene begins with the appreciative comments made by Duncan and Banquo on Macbeth's castle, a place that "hath a pleasant seat" where "The air is delicate" (I. vi. 1-10). Its benign appearance obviously contradicts what the audience can anticipate will take place in it. And the king's total unawareness of the impending murder further aggravates the audiences' worry. All the acting in this scene involves nothing other than smiling and exchanging compliments, producing a courteous and hospitable atmosphere; whereas, the audiences could perceive that the scene is in fact a prelude to a bloody assassination. The sharp contrast between tension and ease here brings out a highly impressive dramatic effect that gives the audiences a dual feeling made up of both ease and worry.

Between the murder of Duncan and the disclosure of the murder, Shakespeare inserted a scene about a drunken porter who makes a long and humorous speech before he opens the gate of Macbeth's castle and let in some noblemen. Here the playwright again created the atmosphere consisting of tension and ease. A very important function of the plot, besides exhibiting the contradiction, is to connect the two parts of the story in a logical way. When Macbeth is still engulfed in his remorse for the murder, there suddenly comes the sound of knocking on the gate, which indicates that somebody is making a very untimely visit and will most probably disclose the crime. What the couple have to finish doing before the visitors enter is to wash the blood on their hands, go to bed and pretend that they do not know a thing about the murder. The playwright ingeniously created a wordy porter who provides them some time to do so. Yet the scene could not last very long, and the couple have to cover up their criminal evidences as quickly as they can. As a result, the tension, which has already begun to grab the audiences' nerves since the scene of the couple's conspiracy, escalates to a new level. Nonetheless, it takes a latent form here. What is shown on the surface is the humor and ease produced by the drunken porter. His funny remarks allow the audiences to have a rest of their minds and get ready for the impact of the following exciting scene: the disclosure of the murder. Watching the porter, the audiences' moods are probably contradictory too. On one hand, they are temporarily released and even made to laugh; on the other hand, their nerves are still strained, as they can perceive that a hasty act of covering

up criminal evidence is going on behind the scene, and that another storm of action and emotion is forthcoming. Creating the porter's scene, Shakespeare created tension and ease both on and off the stage, and the contradiction between two coexisting elements in one common entity is once again demonstrated.

### **B. The Contradiction at the Beginning and in the Closing**

The opening of Shakespeare's plays usually contain some very important information, *Macbeth* is no exception. Shakespeare indicated the significance of the contradiction in the play in its opening through the mouth of the Weird Sisters: "Fair is foul, and foul is fair" (I. i. 11). This well-known line that concludes Scene I is also an epitome of the contradiction in the whole play. It reveals the fact that two contradictory elements often entangle with each other so that people cannot tell them apart. In the scene of Macbeth's first interview with the Weird Sisters, there are also some important indications of the contradiction. Macbeth's first line in the play, "So foul and fair a day I have not seen" (I. iii. 38), not only describes a weather condition which is both sunny and cloudy, but also creates a basic atmosphere for the play as an exhibition of the contradiction. The appearance of the Weird Sisters, too, contains contradictory elements. Their strange facial characteristic --- women face with beard --- is indeed a symbol of the coexistence of male and female qualities in people. Using the above-mentioned elements, Shakespeare gave people messages at the beginning of *Macbeth* about an important aspect of the play, the contradiction.

*Macbeth* is the only principal Shakespearian tragedy that ends with a scene of cheerful celebration. Some might have the thought that such a closing undermines the tragic effect of the play. From the viewpoint of the contradiction, however, we can see that it is indeed a very proper ending which reinforces what the playwright has done so much to convey in the play. In the closing there exists the contradiction between two elements: triumphal happiness and tragic sadness. When Macduff re-enters with Macbeth's head, it is all too clear that the villain-hero, after being mentally tortured in most part of the play, eventually fails to escape his physical retribution. His death is so bloody and brutal that the already-dark play is painted even bleaker; by contrast, what is presented on the stage as the end of the whole story is the happy and exciting celebration held by the Scottish noblemen surrounding their new king. This closing, to most audiences who feel sympathetic for the hero, might seem abrupt and quite hard to accept; it is, nevertheless, wholly logical and reasonable --- the good people have beaten the murderer and tyrant, why shouldn't they be happy? Watching the closing scene that comprises the cheerful celebration of the good characters and the tragic death of the protagonist, the audiences might not know how they should feel --- happy, or blue? By designing an ending that has two contradictory kinds of atmosphere, Shakespeare brought forth another example of the contradiction, and underlined its importance in the whole play.

## **IV. The Contradiction Exhibited in Utterances**

In *Macbeth* the contradiction between two coexisting elements in one common entity is also

exhibited in the implicative words of the characters. Some of the speeches in the play contain two different kinds of meaning, and they hence have dual functions. An example in this respect is Macbeth's speech made after the disclosure of Duncan's death:

Had I but died an hour before this chance,  
I had liv'd a blessed time; for, from this instant  
There's nothing serious in mortality:  
All is but toys: renown and grace is dead;  
The wine of life is drawn, and the mere lees  
Is left this vault to brag of.

(II. iii. 96-101)

The obvious function of this speech is to convey Macbeth's pretense of loyalty. At that very moment it is necessary for the man to make sure that he will not be suspected of being the murderer. Through making the speech he attempts to impress others that he would rather die than witnessing the king's death. Apart from a pretense, however, the speech also functions as an heartfelt expression of the hero's true feeling. The man thinks that, by murdering Duncan, he has deprived himself of all the pleasures, such as honor and respect, that "Macbeth the Hero" used to enjoy. His life of being a honorable general has been totally ravaged, and happiness has gone forever. Here between the same lines, the implications "I am not the murderer" and "I regret murdering him" can be found simultaneously. Though contradictory to each other, the two implications coexist perfectly in one speech, which reveals very thoroughly the complicated and contradictory mood of the hero.

Another example is the prophecies of the Weird Sisters, which are combinations of contradictory messages. As Macbeth comments on them, "This supernatural soliciting / Cannot be ill; cannot be good"(I. iii. 130-131). On the heath the Weird Sisters tell Macbeth some apparently auspicious prophecies. Yet when these prophecies later on come true one by one, he falls into a state of panic and frenzy. The reason is that the brilliant future they foretell, such as being the king of Scotland, is also the beginning of the degeneration of the man. During the Weird Sisters' second interview with Macbeth, they inform him of the good news that "none of woman born / Shall harm Macbeth" (IV. i. 80-81). Nevertheless, the prophecy is also a bad one for it implies that Macbeth will be killed by a man "from his mother's womb / Untimely ripp'd" (V. i.15-16). They told him he will never be defeated unless "Great Birnam wood to high Dunsinane hill / Shall come against him" (IV. i. 93-94). The message is auspicious except it has the implication that the wood will "move" and Macbeth will be killed. Comprising both auspicious and ominous messages, these double-meaning prophecies are self-contradictory, and are partly responsible for the changes of the hero's fate. They lure the general to climb up to the zenith of his career, and lead him down afterwards into an abyss of guilt where he is beyond redemption.

## V. Conclusion

*Macbeth* is often called A Tragedy of Imagination for the abundant imaginative illustrations in it. Examined from a philosophical angle, it can be termed with similar wording as A Tragedy of Contradiction. In this play the contradiction between the elements of two opposite natures that coexist in one common entity is exhibited in a variety of ways, and it has many significant functions: it greatly influences the protagonists' thoughts, actions and their fates; it helps to bring out the extraordinary dramatic effects of some famous scenes; it sets the fundamental atmosphere of the play; and it enables some speeches to convey some profound and complicated meanings. Through exhibiting the contradiction in *Macbeth* in a comprehensive manner, Shakespeare revealed to people the universality of the contradiction: it is everywhere --- in our mind, our action, as well as in our physical world --- and it matters a lot in the changes and developments of our life. "The web of our life is of a mingled yarn, good and ill together" (*All's Well that Ends Well*, qtd. in Goddard, 499). This famous line finds its most elaborate illustration in *Macbeth*.

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# The Negative Effects of the Commercialization of Modern Media

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**Abstract:** With the advancement of technology, modern media has penetrated into every corner of people's lives. In this commercial society, modern media inevitably begins its journey to commercialization. When commercialized media benefits us a lot, it also brings us troubles. This thesis aims to point out the negative effects of the commercialization of modern media from the view of passive and active audiences and media staff. Three sample tragedies are employed for the analysis. In order to discuss the proposition comprehensively, the history and features of modern media are also dealt with. It is revealed that the commercialization without control will give rise to tragic cases and a dim future to modern media itself.

Part I briefly introduces the commercialization of modern media. Part II describes three sample tragedies in connection with media commercialization. Part III analyses these tragedies from different angles. Part IV reviews the history of modern media and point out its new features. Part V states the influence of the commercialization upon modern media. Part VI puts forward some necessary suggestion for avoiding the negative effects of the commercialization of modern media. Part VII gives the final conclusion.

## I. Introduction

With the advancement of science and the development of technology, modern media has penetrated into every corner of people's lives, and has become an organic part of today's society. According to Dominick, media is a method of using certain kind of channels to send messages, and it includes "the mechanical devices" that transmit or store messages, as TV cameras, radio microphones and printing presses, as well as "institutions" making use of above-mentioned devices. When we talk about the media, we should take the people, the policies, the organization and technology into consideration (28). After World War I, media entered the modern age. Modern media covers a much larger scope, and has a closer relationship with the society. As claimed by Folkerts, it "became integrally interconnected" with the commercial world (371). Naturally, modern media began its journey to commercialization, that is, attempts to make money out of media industry, according to Hornby (275). The combination of media and commerce indeed produces a powerful force leading people into a new world. In this world, we share the latest information worldwide, we enjoy the exquisitely made entertaining programs, and we contact one another across mountains and oceans conveniently. However, everything has its two sides. When modern media is purely regarded as a money-earning machine, when profit and market become the ultimate aim it pursues, and when furious competitions elbow away the

necessary professional ethics and regulations, modern media inevitably diverge from the normal, bringing about certain negative effects. A series of tragedies that occurred in the U.K. and the U.S. made me believe that the commercialization of modern media actually had great negative impacts on people's minds, even their behaviors, thus will give rise to tragic cases and even a dim future to modern media itself, unless necessary precautions are taken.

## **II. Three Tragic Scenes Caused by the Effects of Violence in Modern Media**

Tragedy one: on April 20<sup>th</sup>, 1999, in Columbine High school of the US, "Harris and Klebold [, two students of the school,] launched the Columbine massacre, murdering 13 and wounding 23 [teachers and students] before killing themselves [...] Both these two boys love to play 'the bloody shoot-em-up video game Doom. What they did wasn't about anger or hate. It was about them living in the moment, like they were inside a video game'"(Pooley, 23-25).

Tragedy two: "On March 9, 1995, Jonathan Schmitz, then 24, arrived at 32-year-old Scott Amedure's mobile home with a shotgun in his car. Schmitz shot Amedure to death. The murder occurred just three days after Amedure revealed his crush on Schmitz during the taping of a 'secret admirers' segment of [a popular TV talk show program of the U.S.] Jenny Jones' show [...] Schmitz was not only surprised to find out his admirer was of the same sex but also so humiliated by the fact that it drove him to kill."(Dahir, 1)

Tragedy three: On August 31st, "inside the 660-ft. Tunnel [of France], the car [of the former Princess of the U.K. Diana] struck the concrete divider, [...] then apparently cart-wheeled, rolling over a full 360 degree and spinning around nearly 180 degree"(Chua-Eoan, 18). Diana was terribly hurt in this accident. "At 3 a.m. London time, after two hours of massaging Diana's unbeating heart, doctors declared the princess dead. [...] There are more than seven paparazzi thought to have been involved in the high-speed pursuit" (Chua-Eoan, 18).

All of these three tragedies were triggered by the commercialization of modern media directly or indirectly. Earning money could be a powerful motive force to lead modern media to advance. On the other hand, it is like heroin that can drive people crazy. In order to make more money, modern media is utilized to stimulate audiences' sensory organs, to raise their curiosity about others' privacy. All of the moral codes and ethical regulations are forgotten. In the kingdom of commercialized modern media, money is the only king.

## **III. An Analysis of the Negative Effects of Commercialization of Modern Media**

In order to make it clear how the commercialization of modern media exerts the negative effects on people involved, I would further analyze the three tragedies that represent the impacts on three kinds of people: passive audiences, active audiences and media staff.

Modern media, as a tool for message delivery, inevitably relate to a large number of audiences. Most of them are passive audiences who accept the information from the media passively. Exposed to a certain kind of stimulations repeatedly from different media, the audience may copy the stimulation and make it a part of his own behavior. In the case of children audiences, the problem is much more serious. "A series of experiments conducted by psychologist Albert Bandura and his colleagues during the 1960s indicated that, in fact, films and TV might teach

aggressive behaviors” (Dominick, 549). In their experiments, they show children some violent films, and then they found that the children mimicked the behavior they had seen in their real life. This may be the explanation for tragedy one which highlighted the immense influence of modern media. Unfortunately modern media nowadays are like a big supermarket filled with all varieties of goods. One may get anything from it as long as he/she can afford it. Besides, in order to increase the turnover, the sellers cater to the secret needs of customers, regardless of the dangerous results they may cause. As a result, violence, pornography and all other stimuli are injected into modern media to keep a good sales volume and a high profit. Even children themselves also felt the tremendous effects from media, which was clearly shown by Time/CNN Poll among teenagers. When children were asked what was responsible for shootings like one in Columbine, most of their answers concerned modern media, and the rate was very high. Children’s selecting showed that Internet accounts for 75%, movies, TV and music 66%, video games 56%, news 55%. Children are the future of the world. If they grew up under the shadow of the commercialization of modern media, just imagine what kind of future it would be.

Apart from passive audiences, there are also active audiences who participate in media to exchange information, instead of receiving messages passively. Actually, in order to make the media more flexible and lively, the interactive communication between the media and the audiences attracts more and more attention today. Thus the talk show programs like Jenny Jones’ show take shape. In this kind of programs, audiences become a part of the media. They are invited into the studio to exchange their views on certain topic before the camera. Jenny Jones’ show is one of the American most popular talk show programs. The hostess Jenny Jones always selects the most sensitive topics for chat, and invites the guests who most probably cause conflicts in the public. The aim of the program is exposing people’s taboo so as to attracting more audiences. Once the number of audiences watching the program is increased, more companies will sponsor this program. Then it would get more funds. Jenny Jones treaded on the guests’ dignity and disclosed their privacy. Her original motive is very simple. She resorts to low taste just to get more audiences. At last, the tragedy happened. “[...] in the wrongful-death civil suit brought by Amedure's family, Fieger [a lawyer] built his case on the grounds that Schmitz was not only surprised to find out his admirer was of the same sex but also so humiliated by the fact that it drove him to kill. This, he contended, made the Jenny Jones’ show at least partially responsible for Amedure's killing. ‘They picked a murderer and provided a motive,’ Fieger told the jury during closing arguments. ‘They did everything in this case except pull the trigger’”(Dahir, 1). This murder case may be a special one, but Jenny Jones’ show is a representative of a great deal of similar entertainment programs that are bringing all kinds of psychological hurt to the active audiences. At last, Jenny Jones’ show was fined \$25 million. “[The] verdict was meant to be ‘a voice of justice for us all against an industry full of empty souls and absent consciences.’[...] most lawyers and reporters following the trial thought the jury had sent a message that the show and others of its like deserved to be reprimanded for their sensationalism”(Dahir, 1). Besides TV programs, other forms of media are also involved in the interaction with audiences, such as chatting on Internet, exchanging ideas with broadcasting hosts. The public welcome the method,



but once the method is turned into a tool for trying to please public with claptraps, so that larger profit can be exploited, it may result in hatred and contempt among people, as well as tragedies in the life.

As the direct operator of modern media, the media staff undoubtedly couldn't be immune to the disadvantages of commercialized media. On the contrary, their eagerness for quick success and instant benefit underlines the negative impacts. Thus they may be the direct cause of the serious events. The accident of Princess Diana proved it. Just for a few photos of Diana and her lover in their private time, the paparazzi started their insane pursuit. The world lost a charming princess, but the modern media got a golden opportunity to earn money. After all, accidents and the secret of celebrities are the best news for selling. Therefore, the real chaser after Diana is the desire of making money. As Carlson said, "[...] part of the blame has to be placed squarely on the lunacy of publication paying exorbitant amounts for whatever the paparazzi can get by whatever means"(32). The paparazzi may appear in the life of notables any time. They are like spies keeping watch on every act of famous persons during their private time. Moreover, not only celebrities but also ordinary people are stranded by such kind of embarrassment. Dominick once pointed out: "In the past, spying on our personal habits was made more difficult simply because the information was scattered about in different places. Now computers store huge amounts of information about us in one centralized place, the computer's memory, that is easily accessed from anywhere over phone lines"(582). The improvement of media technology offers us high-quality service more conveniently and more promptly. However, when commercialization is involved, the improved media just speed up the destruction of people's sense of security. As people's privacy is infringed upon wantonly, people will not trust anyone any more. Thus the relationship in society will be much more tense than before, which would lead to crimes and tragedies.

To sum up, the commercialization of modern media has greatly influenced all people involved. However, it has never been a one-way impact. As a matter of fact, the public, audiences and staff play a most important role in the development of modern media. They even determine the future of modern media. The relationship between the public and modern media is a circulating circle. These two factors always affect and complement each other. Obviously, if the commercialization of modern media is out of control, a vicious circle will be formed. Once modern media take money as its ultimate aim, it will be devoted to attracting more audiences by hook or by crook. The staff of modern media will inevitably focus on public interests such as violence description, sex pictures, and others' privacy. But things do not always turn out the way they wish. The abuse of public interests will finally cause the disgust of the public. Of course, the vicious circle can be cut off. What we need is just some necessary measures. In order to find out the useful suggestions, it is necessary to understand the commercialization history of modern media.

#### **IV. The History of Modern Media and its New Features Today**

After World War I, media walked into a new era. The advancement of technology and comparatively prosperity of economy rendered a new chance for the development of modern media in some powerful countries, especially in the U.S. Folkerts claimed: "By the end of the