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## Introduction

The video game *Dragon Age: Origins* became critically acclaimed following its release in 2009, selling over 3.2 million copies worldwide according to EA's (Electronic Arts) own data, in addition to winning several game awards the following year, including *Game of the Year* and *Best Role-playing*. (Itucker.) The game has been applauded for its story, setting, and characters, which are well written and developed. This includes the character Loghain Mac Tir, who is one of the two main antagonists of the game. His character is applauded for being neither inherently good nor bad, but being a character driven by the ethics of "immoral means for moral ends," such as betraying his King in order to protect his homeland. Therefore, the thesis statement is as follows; Loghain Mac Tir from *Dragon Age: Origins* is more of an anti-hero than a villain. This is proven through character analysis focusing on dialogue, character descriptions and actions with the basis set in the heroic ethos and genre-specific values of the video game, as well as looking at the effect and importance of point of view in relation to Loghain's portrayal as a character. And finally, looking at reception theory.

## Anti-hero vs. Villain

It is important to establish some basic information related to the process of identifying Loghain as an anti-hero, beginning with ascertaining the difference between an anti-hero and a villain. Furthermore, considering that values attached to the specific genres are relevant, it is necessary to determine what genre *Dragon Age: Origins* falls into. And lastly, defining the term *heroic ethos* and what values and virtues it encompasses. In Theresa Kennedy's *'No Exit' in Racine's Phèdre: The Making of the Anti-Hero*, she begins by establishing that an anti-hero is characterised as a protagonist "lacking in heroic qualities,". However, she continues by determining that they also show the characteristics of: "1) Doomed to failure before the action even begins (...) 2) yet, in accepting her fate, she denies her own flaws by blaming others for her own immoral behaviour." (Kennedy 165). Moreover, according to Monika Bokinieć's *Who Can Find a Virtuous CTU Agent*, although anti-heroes have human flaws, such as being greedy or selfish, they usually have good intentions and use immoral means for moral ends. Furthermore, anti-heroes can be characterised by an inner conflict between their villainous (for example self-indulgent) and heroic (for example self-sacrificing) attributes. (Bokiniec 204). Overall, an anti-hero is a character who deviates from traditional heroic standards, often lacking heroic qualities and frequently portraying themselves as victims. They typically have good intentions but may resort to using immoral or unconventional means to achieve their goals, leading to an inner conflict between their positive and negative traits. For clarification, the phrase "the ends justify the means" or its variation "immoral means for moral ends" is a moral and ethical philosophy which asserts that if a desired outcome is important enough, any method of achieving it is acceptable, even if it involves unethical or immoral actions. This mentality suggests that the goal of an action or a

situation is the only thing that matters, regardless of the morality of the means used to achieve it. (Cambridge Dictionary).

This approach to decision-making implies that the outcome of an action is so valuable that it justifies any negative or immoral means used to achieve it. In other words, the morality of the means is deemed unimportant as long as the desired end result is achieved. This can lead to a situation where people engage in unethical or illegal activities in order to reach their desired outcome. (Oxford Learners Dictionary). Furthermore, a villain is classified, according to Enrique Arenas' *Villains in Our Mind*, as scoring low on the Agreeableness scale, which includes Trust, Straightforwardness, Altruism, Compliance, Modesty, and Tender-Mindedness. This implies that villains tend to be mistrustful of others, prone to exaggeration, self-centered, and prefer to compete rather than cooperate. They often display arrogance and have a more callous and unempathetic demeanor. (Arenas 16).

## Determining Genre

It is important to establish *Dragon Age: Origins*' genre, as it clarifies which values and attributes are applauded and desired within the universe. One could argue that *Dragon Age: Origins* is an Epic and Chivalric Romance, which are both medieval literary genres and as such raise expectations of certain moral qualities. According to the *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, a Chivalric Romance is described as: "(...) the adventures of legendary knights and celebrating an idealized code of civilized behaviour that combines loyalty, honour (...) distinguishes it from the chanson de geste and other kinds of epic, in which masculine military heroism predominates." (Baldick 58). Additionally, a Romance is defined as: "A fictional story in verse or prose that relates improbable adventures of idealized characters in some remote or enchanted setting. (...) Several modern literary genres, from science fiction to the detective story, can be regarded as variants of the romance." (Baldick 313-314). And an Epic is classified as:

(...) celebrating the great deeds of one or more legendary heroes, in a grand ceremonious style. (...) performs superhuman exploits in battle or in marvellous voyages, often serving or founding a nation. (...) The action of epics takes place on a grand scale, and in this sense the term has sometimes been extended to long romances.

(Baldick 119-120).

Based on these definitions it is possible to characterise *Dragon Age: Origins* as an Epic, and to some degree a Chivalric Romance. The attributes of loyalty, honour, and heroism are greatly focused on in the game, as well as celebrating the superhuman deeds of legendary heroes. Look no further than to the Grey Wardens being sung and worshipped as superhuman soldiers, or at King Maric being revered and remembered as a true warrior-king. Also, the importance of the qualities of honour and loyalty is often repeated by several characters, although most of them are knights of some sort. It is especially

found in characters when in the presence of the nobility. For instance, when in Denerim the player character has the chance to meet a nobleman's son imprisoned in one of Loghain's subordinate's estate. If the player character decides to release the prisoner they are rewarded for their honourable actions with the nobleman's loyalty during the Landsmeet. Interestingly, even the plot of the civil war is a question of loyalty, where the two main answers are either to the King or to the Kingdom of Ferelden. (BioWare).

## **Heroic Ethos**

The heroic ethos is a set of beliefs and values that glorifies and promotes the virtues of courage, honour, and loyalty in the pursuit of a noble cause or ideal. It is a code of conduct and a way of life that is exemplified by heroes in myths, legends, and epics. The ethos is meant to portray the ideal warrior-king and create a model for the contemporary ruler. Having the ethos within literature is meant to pass on the continuity and transmission of heroic values. In addition, the heroic ethos helped the Anglo-Saxon community develop a code of ethics, what is praised and what is shamed, as well as applauding the valour of heroes. (Hynes).

## **Reception Theory**

Reception theory is a theoretical framework used to analyse how people interpret and make meaning of cultural texts, such as literature, film, and art. According to reception theory, the meaning of a text is not fixed or inherent in the text itself, but is instead created in the mind of the reader or viewer through their individual experiences, beliefs, and cultural contexts. The interpretation of a text is therefore subjective and can vary widely depending on the audience's background and social position. Reception theory emphasises the importance of considering the reader or viewer's role in the creation of meaning and the impact of their personal experiences and cultural background on their understanding of a text. (Eagleton 64-65). In this text, reception theory will be used to determine the degree of "identification" possible with the character of Loghain. According to Murray Smith's *Engaging Characters*, the term "identification" is generally used to describe the experience of the emotional response to fictional characters and events. However, other words can also be adequate to use instead of identification, such as empathy or absorption. Furthermore, the audience's response to fictional characters often relies on their ability to resonate with the characters, and is linked to their degree of enjoyment of said media. The audience also forms an attachment to fictional characters based on values and qualities, either those that they possess or wish to possess (Smith 2). Additionally, Thomas Petraschka argues in his article, *How Empathy with Fictional Characters Differs from Empathy with Real Persons*, that it in some cases is easier to become emotionally connected to or identify with fictional characters, since the audience experiences the same emotional

events as the character of the story when consuming the media. This might make it easier to sympathise with the character's reasonings and reactions, because, in a sense, the audience undergoes the events together with the character. (Petraschka).

## **Character Analysis**

In David Gaider's book, *Dragon Age: The Stolen Throne*, the most notable parts of Loghain's backstory begin during the Orlesian occupation of Ferelden. Ferelden has received an Orlesian tyrant, as their ruler, and he governs the kingdom with an iron fist. Loghain's father was accused of tax evasion and, as a result, both Loghain and his father were forced to watch as Loghain's mother was raped, beaten, and then killed. This is what sparks the hatred for the Orlesians within Loghain, a fire that would burn strong for years to come (Gaider, 408.) It is established very early on in *Dragon Age: The Stolen Throne* that Loghain would do anything to reach his goals, regardless if it was morally right. Loghain was always willing to make the tough decisions because he knew it needed to be done in order to succeed, whether that be in regards to the rebellion in *Dragon Age: The Stolen Throne* or the civil war in *Dragon Age: Origins*. In addition, the audience might be inclined to "excuse" Loghain's actions in *Dragon Age: The Stolen Throne*, considering he is on the "good" side in the story. He is on the side trying to liberate Ferelden from an Orlesian tyrant, making him one of the "heroes" of the story. "'Tell me, Maric, that her treachery didn't call out for blood.' 'You wanted this,' Maric realised, his voice quiet. Loghain looked him in the eyes, unrepentant. 'I wanted you to see the truth. You told me you wanted to win this war. *This* is how it must be.'" (Gaider 408-409). This is an example of Loghain's "the ends justify the means" mentality, moulding his friend and future king, Maric, into becoming the type of king that would also be able to make tough decisions regarding the future of Ferelden by manipulating Maric into getting rid of everything that made him weak, his blind trust in people, and the love of his life, Katriel. Loghain's first visual appearance is in the first game, *Dragon Age: Origins*. It is interesting to note that his first appearance is made subsequent to King Calian, and their appearances and personalities come off as total opposites, as seen in the picture below.



BioWare. *Dragon Age: Origins*. "First meeting with Loghain and King Cailan." Electronic Arts. 2009. Image 1.

Purely focusing on the visuals, Cailan can be seen as young, brave, happy-go-lucky, and Prince Charming-esque, wearing golden armour opposed to Loghain's silver. In comparison, Loghain appears old, wrinkly, sneering, and grumpy. Making these characters polar opposites does something to the expectations of the audience. The audience is introduced to Cailan as a kind and fool-hardy king, who is the hero of the story in some way. The result of this is that it is easier to picture Loghain as the villain and makes the surprise of his betrayal less shocking. There are a few suggestions as to Loghain's motives for betraying King Cailan at the battle of Ostagar. First of all, it is important to mention that nobody in Ferelden, except for the Grey Wardens, believed that there was a Blight beginning, not even the king, Cailan. As he mentions when the player character first meets him:

PC: "It sounds as if the Blight is almost over."

Cailan: "I'm not even sure this is a true Blight. (...)" (BioWare).

Interestingly, not even Loghain himself believes this to be a true Blight:

Loghain: "The nobility shall be brought into line, then the darkspawn defeated. This is no true Blight, Anora. Only Cailan's vanity demanded it be so." (BioWare).

So, it could be assumed that everyone underestimated the sheer force of the Darkspawn (zombie-like creatures) that would appear during the battle at Ostagar. However, there might be a reason for why the King's army had fewer numbers than the Darkspawn, and that might be Loghain's doing. It is established when meeting King Cailan that they are waiting for the soldiers from Redcliffe. However, whether Cailan had won or lost the battle of Ostagar, the army from Redcliffe would have never

arrived regardless. That is due to Loghain having someone poison the Arl of Redcliffe, Cailan's uncle, before the events of the game. Loghain had hoped that the lack of numbers would dissuade Cailan from entering the battle at Ostagar, because as established earlier; nobody but the Wardens believed this was a real Blight. (BioWare.) However, this might not have been the only reason for Loghain poisoning the Arl of Redcliffe. Unlike Loghain, Cailan had no hate or suspicion towards either the Grey Wardens or the Orlesians. This made Loghain uneasy, considering that Cailan was inviting the Orlesians into the country mere decades after Maric, Loghain, and Queen Rowan had nearly sacrificed their lives to get the Orlesians out of Ferelden. To Loghain this could have been seen as an act of treason, or at the very least spitting on Maric's and Rowan's graves. Regarding the Grey Wardens, it is important to note that their organisation has been exiled from Ferelden for two centuries, due to them trying to overthrow the current king. This made many Fereldens in the following years suspicious of the Wardens, considering that they are not supposed to involve themselves in anything political. After their exile, many Fereldens began to think that their organisation was no longer needed or relevant. Now, in Loghain's mind, he is still suspicious of the Grey Wardens, due to their previous coup attempt and the fact that they are *Orlesian* Grey Wardens. (Little is known about this event in history, meaning that many do not know that the King at the time was corrupt. However, at the time of *Dragon Age: Origins* most Fereldens have an innate disdain for the Grey Wardens. (BioWare)). This relates to the poisoning of the Arl, because Loghain was, at the very least, *attempting* to overthrow Cailan. The Arl of Redcliffe was Cailan's biggest and strongest supporter, and whether Cailan's death was intended or not, Loghain was planning to get rid of him and make his daughter, Cailan's wife, the sole ruler.

Loghain: "Never! Maric and I drove those bastards out! We will not roll out the welcome for them now!" (BioWare).

Because to Loghain there was no bigger betrayal or sign of weakness than to invite the Orlesians into their kingdom, after everything Ferelden had to endure during the revolution. Nevertheless, it is important to note that in conversation with Anora, Loghain's daughter, it is revealed that Loghain's hatred and paranoia of the Orlesians and his love of Ferelden might have driven him to the point of madness (something even his second-in-command, Ser Cauthrien, admits). The player character can ask her why Loghain does not just back down, and Anora will tell them that it is because Loghain believes that he is right. He thinks he is the only one who can save Ferelden from the Darkspawn and civil war, even though he is the cause of one of the crises. His intention, at the very least, was never a civil war, he only wanted to fight the darkspawn without the aid of Orlais. (BioWare.)

Anora: "What my father saw, however, was the boy he had swaddled inviting Orlesian troops back into the land he had fought free of them." (BioWare).



The quote above shows that Cailan's actions in inviting the Orlesians into Ferelden sparked the belief within Loghain that he had to take matters into his own hands and protect Ferelden from the Orlesians himself, even if it meant sacrificing Cailan. Moreover, Loghain has an interesting monologue in the game during the Landsmeet, where his accusations make it sound as if the Warden (i.e., the player character) is in league with and working for Orlais.

Loghain: "Tell us Warden: How **will** the Orlesians take our nation from us? Will they deign to send their troops, or simply issue their commands through this would-be prince?"

Loghain: "What did they offer you? How much is the price of Fereldan honor now?" (BioWare).

Loghain is so badly blinded by his hatred for Orlais that he is convinced that the Wardens are subordinates of the Empire, even though the player character and Alistair are both Fereldens. His worries lie in the fact that the other Wardens travelling to aid against the Blight were from Orlais. That was enough for Loghain. After Loghain is defeated by the player character and if the player allows Loghain to join them he will, after finally gaining some clarity, say that in the moment of the supposed threat from the Orlesians, his judgement might have been slightly clouded. (BioWare.) It is also important to note that in *Dragon Age: The Stolen Throne*, Loghain proposed a plan to help the Rebel Army survive an enemy ambush. In his plan, Loghain would disguise himself as Maric and draw the bulk of the forces away from the rest of the Rebels. The plan was a suicide mission; Loghain's and his fellow soldier's lives depended on them being rescued after the rest of the Rebel Army had dealt with their end of the problem. "And after that? Loghain hoped they would be in a position to come to his rescue. Because he would need one, without question." (Gaider 117). "Volunteers, they were told, because the chances that none of them might make it back were quite high." (Gaider 118). This shows that Loghain was willing to partake in a suicide mission if it allowed for the rest of the Rebel Army to survive, and signing up for something that you do not know if you will survive takes a great deal of courage. Showing that Loghain is courageous.

Based on the evidence, it is possible to determine whether or not Loghain fits the characteristics of an anti-hero. This includes checking if he embodies the values of valour, honour, and loyalty, as well as having an internal conflict between right and wrong, and self-victimisation. Loghain does possess the characteristic of blaming others for his flaws, as well as victimising himself, as seen during the Landsmeet:

Loghain: "None of you deserve a say in what happens here! None of you have spilled blood for this land the way I have!"

Loghain: "How dare you judge me!" (BioWare).

And it is quite evident that he has the “immoral means for moral ends” mentality, considering he did sell elves (who in the world of *Dragon Age* are considered less than dirt by most humans) to slavers in order to further fund his war campaign against the Wardens (i.e., the player character.) (BioWare). Considering the definitions of what being an anti-hero entails and looking at Loghain’s actions and behaviour, it is possible to identify him as an anti-hero in relation to the ends justify the means mentality, and the victimisation of himself. However, it could also be argued that he is not honourable, in regards to him selling elves to slavers. Yet, this could also prove that he has some form of inner conflict between right and wrong.

Loghain: “Despite what you may think, Warden, I have done my duty. Whatever my regrets may be for the elves, I have done what was needed for the good of Ferelden.” (BioWare).

Moreover, it is evident that Loghain possesses the qualities of valour and loyalty. The quality of valour is shown in *Dragon Age: The Stolen Throne*, when he was willing to sacrifice himself to let the Rebel Army and Prince Maric have a fighting chance against the Orlesian tyrant. Regarding loyalty, it has been proven quite a few times that Loghain’s loyalty has always been to the Kingdom of Ferelden and its people, as seen at the Battle of Ostagar, when he decided to retreat because he did not want anymore losses in what he saw as an already lost cause, and in wanting to potentially overthrow King Cailan, as Loghain saw Cailan’s invitation to the Orlesians as some form of betrayal. Overall, the evidence suggests that Loghain fits the characteristics of an anti-hero quite well, based on the definitions of the term anti-hero and the fact that he does possess some heroic qualities, which were established using the heroic ethos and values apparent with the game’s genre of Chivalric-Romance and Epic.

### **The Effect of Point of View**

Point of view in literature has the power to determine how certain characters or events are interpreted by the audience. In the *Dragon Age* universe, there exist different opinions concerning Loghain’s action during the Battle of Ostagar, and different views about what actually happened. For one, you have Ser Landry, a Lieutenant serving under Loghain, whom he is also close friends with, during the Battle of Ostagar. Ser Landry believes that it was the Grey Wardens that killed King Cailan, at which point Ser Landry confronts the player when meeting them in Ferelden’s capital Denerim:

Ser Landry: “You killed my friend-and good King Cailan. I demand satisfaction, ser.” (BioWare).

Ser Landry is described as chivalrous and honourable and was at Ostagar himself, witnessing Loghain's retreat first-hand, and he was still convinced that it was the Wardens who caused the King's death, not Loghain. Even decades after the Battle of Ostagar, some characters still believed that he was no villain. In *Dragon Age: Inquisition*, there is a character named Threnn who served under Loghain during the Battle of Ostagar. She claims that everyone turned on him in Denerim and that he was one of the best commanding officers that the world had ever seen. (BioWare.) On the other hand, you have characters such as Wynne, who is a potential mage companion of the player. Wynne was also present during the Battle of Ostagar - however, she does not agree with Loghain's actions at Ostagar and blatantly thinks him a traitor. Some interesting dialogue can occur if the player brings both Wynne and Loghain to Ostagar in the Return to Ostagar DLC, which includes Wynne and Loghain bantering, leading to Loghain admitting that it was a hard choice to decide to abandon Cailan. However, he states he would do it again. (BioWare). Later Wynne would ask Loghain if he would have regrets if it was his daughter, Anora, who had been leading the battle instead of Cailan. Loghain retorts that it would have been no different, since he claims Cailan was beyond saving.

Loghain: "The Darkspawn would either have had him or have had us all. Do you really believe we would have been so much better off had I chosen otherwise?"

Wynne: "It is my belief that a man who ties his own hands behind his back should not cry foul that there is no one left to defend his king!" (BioWare).

However, the most noteworthy interaction comes from a conversation with the mage Solas in *Dragon Age: Inquisition*. Solas is a mage who is capable of traversing the Fade (a spirit-like realm) and can see past events played out by spirits.

Solas: "I dreamt at Ostagar. I witnessed the brutality of the darkspawn and the valor of the Ferelden warriors."

Solas: "I saw Alistair and the Hero of Ferelden light the signal fire... and Loghain's infamous betrayal of Cailan's forces."

PC: "I've heard the stories. It would be interesting to hear what it was really like."

Solas: "That's just it. In the Fade, I see reflections created by spirits who react to the emotions of the warriors."

Solas: "One moment, I see heroic wardens lighting the fire and a power-mad villain sneering as he lets King Cailan fall."

Solas: "The next, I see an army overwhelmed and a veteran commander refusing to let more soldiers die in a lost cause."

PC: "And you can't tell which is real?"

Solas: "It is the Fade. They are all real." (BioWare).

The quote above indicates that both sides of this story are true. Loghain is both the villain that let his king die during the battle, but he is also the responsible commander who would not let his soldiers die unnecessarily. Because in Loghain's mind "it was a fool's battle, lost before it begun." (BioWare). However, the effect of point of view might be even more substantial. The main character in *Dragon Age: Origins* is the future Hero of Ferelden and Grey Warden, being played by the player. And so, the player has an incredible amount of agency and power over what happens in the narrative of the story. However, in some cases the response to certain topics seems to be limited and this might be related to the point of view being from a biased source. It is no surprise that the game is set up so that it would be the good (i.e., the Wardens) versus the bad (i.e., Loghain). However, what is interesting is that the game might be leading the audience's opinions about characters, such as Loghain, through their use of an unreliable narrator, the player's character. Since it was revealed that Loghain had retreated from the battle at Ostagar, the PC's opinions, and therefore responses, are very assured of Loghain's villainy.



BioWare. *Dragon Age: Origins*. «Conversation with Bann Teagan.» Electronic Arts. 2009. Image 2.

The screenshot above depicts a conversation the player has with an important nobleman, Bann Teagan, who is suspicious of Loghain's motives at Ostagar. Both the PC, PC's companions, and Bann Teagan do not have positive opinions regarding Loghain. The choices given to the player either do not address the topic of Loghain or accuse Loghain of lying. None of the choices question why he would lie. This might indicate that the player's opinions of Loghain are meant to be guided towards those of villainy. However, this poses the problem that the narrator (i.e., the player character) is unreliable and,

therefore, the portrayal of Loghain's character might be deceptive. Hansen argues that, in a cognitive approach, "It is rather seldom that narrators plead their own unreliability." And continues that it is always connected to an interpretation in order to determine whether a narrator is unreliable. (Hansen 235). Regarding the player character in *Dragon Age: Origins*, it might be plausible to determine the narrator as unreliable. Furthermore, it is also possible that the game developers intended for the audience to be guided towards a negative opinion of Loghain. Since in certain dialogues, the response options are rather one-sided. "The aim of interactive storytelling is to make the players choose precisely those possibilities which will form a story-like line of actions and events (without letting them know that they are guided in a certain direction.)" (Neitzel 617). However, this is just speculation.

### **The Audience's Sympathy**

It is possible for the audience to sympathize more with the feelings of self-indulgence, opposed to those of self-sacrifice, and therefore also relate more to a morally imperfect character than to the hero. In relation to identifying with characters who are portrayed as having flaws, because that is much more realistic than having none, Loghain's flaws are pride and arrogance. As seen in Loghain's distrust of foreign powers and individuals, particularly the Orlesians, further bolstered his pride. He saw himself as a defender of Ferelden's independence and believed that he alone understood what was best for his nation. Loghain's desire for power and control also played a role in his pride and arrogance. He resented others challenging his authority and saw any opposition as a threat to his position and influence. It could also be said that having a more complex antagonist makes them easier to be identified or sympathised with, opposed to having a true evil antagonist, for instance the Archdemon, who is evil because it is in its nature. In the instance of Loghain's mother's death, the audience might experience sympathy towards Loghain. The excessively cruel nature of the Orlesian oppressors, contrasted with the excessively innocent and feminine victim (i.e., Loghain's mother) factors into the audience's sympathy for Loghain and his immoral actions. In addition, the audience becomes more interested in Loghain seeking out justice, even if that justice becomes the less moral version, namely revenge. The audience then begins to sympathize with Loghain and sees his immoral actions as a result of excessive cruelty. As mentioned earlier in the thesis, Loghain does possess a number of what are considered heroic and positive qualities, for instance loyalty and courage, in addition to having the good intentions of protecting Ferelden from both the Darkspawn and the Orlesians (although the latter one was unnecessary). This goes to show that while his hatred against Orlais is strong, it is mostly rooted in his love of Ferelden, and that is something the audience can relate to: loving something so much it might blind you of other things. This could make the audience more sympathetic towards Loghain's actions once they realise his intentions and motivations, which are primarily rooted in the love for his country. Furthermore, Loghain has been revered and

recognised as one of the greatest military strategists in the history of the world of Thedas, and this is proven throughout *Dragon Age: The Stolen Throne*. As such, most characters in the novel adhere to Loghain's plans even though they are not certain it is the right thing to do, because Loghain's plans ultimately turned out with impressive results. Having other characters besides Loghain believe that the ends justify the means makes the audience sympathise with Loghain's decisions because they are accepted by other characters. "And most of all she hated that he was right." (Gaider 412). This is said in relation to Loghain telling Rowan, Maric's betrothed, that Maric had killed Katriel, who they had uncovered was an enemy spy. Rowan is at first disgusted that Loghain did not tell Maric that Katriel had switched sides and had betrayed her former employer, the Orlesian tyrant, however, she quickly realises that it was what had to be done even though she despises herself for being involved. Rowan is one of the typical knights found within Chivalric Romances, she embodies the values of loyalty, honour, and valour to the highest degree. And to see such a character admit that Loghain's immoral means was for the moral ends, aids in convincing the audience of the same, making it easier to sympathise with Loghain's idea of the ends justifying the means. Moreover, Loghain's character arc is not just about his fall from grace, but also about his potential for redemption, in the events that the player decides to spare Loghain and induct him into the Grey Wardens. In this scenario, it is revealed in *Dragon Age: Inquisition* that Loghain regrets many of his actions and decisions and that he would do anything to make up for his mistakes.

Fear Demon: "Teyrn Loghain Mac Tir, the brilliant commander. Pity the one time you tried to rule, you failed so miserably.

Fear Demon: "You had to be beaten, humiliated, lest you destroy your own country.

Fear Demon: "You even doomed the Wardens by bringing the Inquisitor down on them. You destroy everything you touch."

Loghain: "Is that all you've got? It's nothing I've not said to myself." (BioWare).

Loghain is willing to go as far as to sacrifice his life, first during the battle against the Archdemon, then again during the fight against a Fear Demon in the Fade in *Dragon Age: Inquisition*. (BioWare). By showing him making amends for his actions and trying to make things right, the audience might see him in a more sympathetic light. Ultimately, deciding whether Loghain is relatable and his motives suitable for sympathy depends on the audience and their own personalities, such that a player who values loyalty and honour might see Loghain's betrayal as unforgivable, while a player who prioritizes strategic thinking and practicality might view Loghain's actions as necessary or understandable.

## Conclusion

Loghain Mac Tir from *Dragon Age: Origins* has been proven to pertain heroic qualities which are often found in the heroic ethos, epics, and chivalric romances; these virtues include loyalty and courage, but not honour, as being honourable includes doing what is morally right, something Loghain does not, as shown when he sells elves into slavery for instance. However, he proves repeatedly that he is loyal to his country and would go to great lengths to maintain its freedom, like betraying his King because he was inviting their former oppressor, the Orlesians, into the country. Regarding courage, Loghain showed great valour during battles in the novel *Dragon Age: The Stolen Throne*, often at the disregard of his own life for the chance that Ferelden could be free from the Orlesians. Loghain is a competent leader with a keen sense of duty and loyalty to his country. He has a fierce devotion driving him to become blind in his actions and he is fiercely patriotic and is willing to do whatever it takes to protect his country, even if it means making difficult, and often immoral, decisions. However, he does also possess qualities that mark him as more villainous, or at the very least anti-heroic. Firstly, it is the fact that he tries to victimise himself during the Landsmeet: he tries to argue that since none of the other nobles shed blood like he did for Ferelden during the Rebellion, they do not get to judge him for his actions. Secondly, it is quite evident that Loghain believes that the ends justify his actions, and as such is willing to do nearly anything to achieve his goal, which in this case is to protect Ferelden against Orlais (as well as the Grey Wardens, which Loghain believes are in league with Orlais) and the Darkspawn. Thirdly, is the inner conflict between right and wrong, which is again shown in his dealings with selling the local elves to slavers. He does admit that it is wrong and that he regrets it, yet he justifies it by saying it was necessary to further fund his war campaign. Furthermore, it is shown throughout the game series that the truth is in the eye of the beholder and is ultimately subjective. In the instance of Loghain's actions at Ostagar, whether he betrayed his King or protected his soldiers from unnecessary bloodshed, were proven to both be true, depending on who the player talks to. Moreover, it was also shown that the player character themselves could be an unreliable narrator, and therefore colour the portrayal of Loghain's character as dishonest, as the character is biased against Loghain, and the player is not allowed to think otherwise of him based on the response options presented in the game. Lastly, Loghain is proven to possess multiple qualities which are relatable to the audience and could therefore cast him in a more sympathetic light. These values are the same heroic qualities as mentioned earlier (loyalty and courage), however, some of his vice makes him as relatable as his virtues, because a character that has both flaws and strengths is much more complex and human, therefore making them more relatable. In addition, his backstory gives the audience an interest in his revenge and could therefore also justify his means. Furthermore, other characters' acceptance and support towards Loghain's actions and motives aids in the audience embracing his ideas as necessary. It is also fascinating to note that *Dragon Age: Origins* and *Dragon Age: The Stolen Throne* seems to toy with the genres of Epic and Chivalric Romance, as it appears

that they borrow certain features of each genre, which might cause incorrect expectations at the lack of inconsistency with the rest of the missing features. As mentioned, both genres are from the medieval period and as such carry influences from Christianity, meaning that ideas, meaning that ideas such as revenge are expressly forbidden, although Loghain still wishes to obtain in *Dragon Age: The Stolen Throne*. *Dragon Age: Origins* ultimately creates a post-Christian, humanist heroic. In conclusion, Loghain has been proven to fit into the category of an anti-hero more than he does that of a villain, since he possesses characteristics, actions, and motives that are both heroic and anti-heroic, in addition to being susceptible to sympathy and understanding from the audience.



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