

Machiavelli and the Price of Man's Avarice in William Shakespeare's *Macbeth*

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المستخلص

يختص هذا البحث بالعواقب الوخيمة للأفعال السيئة والإجرامية لبعض الحكماء فقط لتحقيق ماربهم الشخصية وتأثيراتها السلبية على أعضاء المجتمع الذي تحدث فيه. أختبر كثيرا من الناس في جميع أنحاء العالم وعلى مر الزمان بعض الأخطاء الجسيمة التي تؤدي إلى الحرب. من هنا، مثل هكذا ناس مجبرين على أن يعانون صدمة فقدان أقاربهم وأصدقائهم، وجميع أشكال الدمار، ناهيك عن الذكر، التفكك الاجتماعي والمشاكل النفسية والجسدية وكذلك الأمراض الاجتماعية الأخرى، كالقتل، المتاجرة بالشرف، السرقة، وكل أنواع الأفعال الإجرامية.

يهدف البحث لتعريف القارئ عن معالجة وليم شكسبير (١٥٦٤-١٦١٦) في مسرحيته ماكبث لبعض القرارات الخطأة للحكام وعواقبها الوخيمة على الشعب. في مسرحيته، يحاول شكسبير مخاطبة حكام إنكلترا ويحذرهم من مغبة إيهام شعوبهم من خلال سلوكهم الشخصي المؤذن كنتيجة عن، على سبيل المثل، طموحهم المفرط أو أي مرض نفسي آخر. علاوة على ذلك، يهدف البحث أيضاً لتعريف القارئ حول تأثيرات نيكولو ماكيافيلي (١٤٦٩-١٥٢٧)، المفكر السياسي اليهودي الإيطالي، على شكسبير. أعطى ماكيافيلي نصائح في كتابه المشهور "الأمير" لجميع الحكام الطموحين الذين يأملون الحصول على الامارة من خلال استخدام الوسائل الإجرامية عندما وضح افكاره حول كيفية مقدرة أمير أو حاكم أن يرتب أمره ليحصل على السلطة وكيف هو يحافظ على تلك السلطة عند الحصول عليها.

عند كتابة المسرحية، شكسبير كان مدركاً تماماً للحروب الكارثية الماضية التي عانى المجتمع الانكليزي كثيراً صدمة فقدان الآباء، الأمهات، وحتى الأطفال ناهيك عن الذكر البطالة، المجائعة، المتاجرة بالشرف، وما شابه ذلك. صور شكسبير في مسرحيته الصورة المفززة الحقيقة لحالات الإنسان الفدراة حيث تمتزج المعاناة مع المصير المجهول نتيجةً لأخطاء الحكماء الفادحة التي تؤدي ليس فقط لتدمير الناس وممتلكاتهم بل الحكماء المعندين أنفسهم، مذكراً بطريقة غير مباشرة المشاهدين في ذلك الوقت بالعواقب الوخيمة للحروب ومعطياً وميضاً للأمل، الإيمان، والارتياب لهم ليغيروا من أنفسهم ومجتمعاتهم لتكون أكثر تحضرًا وازدهاراً.

ABSTRACT

The research deals with the terrible consequences of some rulers' criminal wrongdoings in order to achieve only their personal interests and their negative effects on the members of the community where they take place. In the course of time, many people worldwide experience some rulers' blunders and such people are the only loser who are made to suffer the trauma of losing their relatives and friends, and all forms of destruction, not to mention the social disintegration and physical and psychological problems as well as the other social diseases, like killing, prostitution, robbery and all sorts of criminal actions.

The research aims at acquainting the reader with William Shakespeare (1564-1616) treatment of some rulers' wrong decisions and their terrible consequences on people in his masterpiece *Macbeth*. In his play, Shakespeare tries to address rulers of England and warns them not to hurt their peoples throughout their mischievous personal behavior due to their excessive ambition. Moreover, the research also aims at familiarizing the reader with the influence of Niccolo Machiavelli (1469-1527), the Italy Jewish political thinker, on Shakespeare. Machiavelli gives advice throughout his principles in his famous book "The Prince" to all aspiring rulers who are contemplating the act of obtaining a principality through the use of criminal methods when he set out his ideas on how a prince or a ruler of a country could arrange to attain power and how he might keep that power once he had secured it.

When writing the play, Shakespeare certainly was fully aware of the past disastrous wars from which England community had suffered too much the trauma of losing fathers, mothers and even children not to mention unemployment, starvation, prostitution, poverty, and the like.

Niccolo Machiavelli (1469-1527) is the most controversial political thinker of the Renaissance who greatly influenced the minds of Renaissance thinkers. He is an Italian Jewish theorist who writes his well-known book *The Prince* which portrays men as inherently corrupt and bases individuals who strive only for personal gain. His keen

interest for history and politics as well as the military strategy led him to theorize about the nature of civil society and government in particular.

It is important to mention that after publishing *The Prince*, both the Catholic and the newly formed Protestant Church condemned the book and it was in fact banned in Elizabethan England¹. The papacy placed it on its list of banned books in 1559, but it was nevertheless read widely by the Elizabethan political class during this period.

In *The Prince*, Machiavelli depicts the idea of evil in one of his most controversial principles "The end justifies the means"², as John Roe has noted; "Machiavelli at no point advocates the practice of evil as acceptable in itself – despite what his many detractors then and now have said; he concedes, rather, that evil sometimes has to be used."³. It is in this respect that characters such as Hamlet can be viewed as Machiavellian despite the fact that Hamlet is not clearly evil when he is faced with the task of killing a legitimately elected monarch in order to avenge his father, with no concrete evidence, and only the word of the Ghost for proof. In fact Hamlet would only be following in the footsteps of Claudius who is absolutely Machiavellian schemer as he kills his brother (The King) to usurp his throne and have his wife, and, for at least a portion of the play, a particularly skillful one, on the grounds that he achieved a relatively quiet transition into his position of power having committed only one murder.

In general, people at any place and time worldwide, dream of having things or positions in this mortal world due to their ambitions and expectations, but some of them are contented as they are satisfied with their life while others are dying to do whatever their evil spirit orders them to do, indifferent whatever it costs even if it costs them killing people just like the character of Macbeth in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* who unjustly killed his king to usurp his throne. This almost directly mirrors the plight that Macbeth faces throughout each day of his cursed life after the murder of King Duncan of Scotland. The list of people that he feels necessary to kill continues to grow with each passing day in order to retain his power.

By presenting his principles in the *Prince*, Machiavelli gives advice to all aspiring rulers who are contemplating the act of obtaining a principality through the use of criminal methods when he set out his ideas on how a prince or a ruler of a country could arrange to attain power and how he might keep that power once he had secured it. In *Macbeth*, the protagonist Macbeth experiences agony and disorder during his life as he does not kill all his supposed enemies by one blow. Thus, he resorts to the three witches who tell him in advance the prophecy of becoming a King in order to gain some sense of stability in his life and kingdom. He misunderstands the witches' prophecies, and thereby cloaks himself with a misguided sense of security. This leads him to his eventual death at the hands of Macduff which is parallel to the doom that Machiavelli projects with the above-stated impossibility of self-maintenance in such a state.

Macbeth, the tragic hero of a play bears his name *Macbeth*, is a good example of someone who carries out one of the Machiavellian's principles mentioned above which is "The end justifies the means"⁴ through obtaining his kingdom in a criminal manner, in which he and his wife conspire together to kill the present king, Duncan, in their castle in Inverness in Scotland, and then blame their murder on his drunken guards, forgetting the terrible consequences that eventually led them to their impending doom.

Macbeth dramatizes the passive psychological and political effects produced when its protagonist, the Scottish lord Macbeth, chooses evil as the way to fulfill his ambition for power by killing the King and committing a series of murderous terror to stay in power, eventually plunging the country into civil war. The result is that he loses everything that gives meaning and purpose to his life before losing his life itself.

The tragic story of Macbeth starts after he achieved victories against the rebels and during his return he receives a prophecy from a trio of witches that he will be promoted to the positions of "Thane of Glamis" and "Thane of Cowdor" and eventually he will become King of Scotland.

First Witch. All hail, Macbeth! Hail to thee, Thane of Glamis!
 Second Witch. All hail, Macbeth! Hail to thee, Thane of Cowdor!
 Third Witch. All hail, Macbeth! That shalt be king hereafter.

(Macbeth Act 1, 3, 48, 49, 50)⁵

After hearing the witches predict, Banquo notes that his friend Macbeth was hearing the prophecy with rapt attention, suggesting that he is pleased by the prophecy.

BANQUO: My noble partner
 You greet with present grace and great prediction
 Of noble having and of royal hope,
 That he seems rapt withal. To me you speak not.
 If you can look into the seeds of time,
 And say which grain will grow and which will not,
 Speak then to me, who neither beg nor fear
 Your favors nor your hate. (1.iii.54-60)

Besides, the witches have prophesied Banque that he will be father of kings "Thou shalt get kings, though thou be none" (1.iii. 67-68) but he didn't understand well the prophecy as he is eager to hear what the witches have stored for him, thinking of what the witches had told him about himself, saying: "... myself should be the root and father /Of many kings." (III.i. 5-6). He thinks of the prophecy made about him by the witches; what the third witch in fact said was; Though shalt get kings, though thou be none (1.iii.67). We can see that Banquo is ambitious because he is pleased when he learns later on that his heirs will be kings even though he will never wear the crown. Yet, Banquo never takes drastic measures to gain power for himself or his heirs, which makes him a foil to Macbeth who will do in a Machiavellian way whatever he wants of bad deeds, including killing his friends or even their children to secure his power.

The witches' prophecy silences Macbeth for a while which means that it illustrates how close the witches' greetings and prophecy have come to his deep secret wishes. It is easy to discern that Macbeth has a wild desire of ambition inside him when he says aside: "Stars, hide your fires/ Let not light see my black and deep desires," (I, iv, 50-51). In other words, Macbeth has deep powerful destructive ambition inside him as he metaphorically asks the stars to hide his "deep desires".

Obviously, Macbeth believes what the witches say and eagerly inside wants them to be true. Though the witches are responsible for giving Macbeth the prophecies, it is his own fault for believing them and trying to pursue them naturally due to his feelings of ambition, jealousy and envy towards the current King.

In Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, a destructive type of jealousy ignites Cassius' feelings to the extent that he seeks nothing but Caesar's death. His hate is simply motivated by the fact that when both at school they were of equal rank and position, but now Cassius feels the great difference between himself and Caesar. Then, jealousy would be destructive and is therefore an evil trait to inhabit Man's soul and body. According to G.B. Harriossn (1894-1991), a British scholar and critic, the tragic dramatist, should make available, as an essential ingredient of his drama, a sense of *lacrima rerum*, a profound moral sense, for he could neither be moved nor moving unless he possess a natural sense of all the various passions and human characteristic features-happiness and sadness, pity and horror, good and evil, right and wrong, love and hatred and so on. The hero in *Titus Andronicus* should be tortured because of his magnanimity; Othello must meet his doom because he trusts people profoundly; Macbeth should suffer the pains from the pricks of conscience and then meet his end because he is too ambitious and he is the one aiming at fulfilling his ambitions by means of illegal ways, vengeance and murder; because of his follies, Lear should be punished by his two evil daughters and the bastard Edmund. Thus various passions which point to Shakespeare's genuine yet sound awareness of human nature are to wrap and move his characters. Spectators are to detect the moral sense underlying these passions and the outcome they are to fulfill. To Harrison," The moral sense—the ability to appreciate the essential meaning of an event—is part of Shakespeare's universality, and it is one of the qualities so conspicuously lacking in his contemporaries."⁶

Apparently, the witches' prophecy ignites Macbeth's deep ambition to fulfill the next part of the prophecy, concerning of ascending the throne of Scotland. In general, ambition is the desire to be successful, rich and powerful but in Macbeth's case it is presented as a dangerous quality because it doesn't only cause the tragic downfall of

Macbeth and his wife, Lady Macbeth, but it also triggers a series of deaths throughout the play in which ambition is therefore the driving evil force of the play. Macbeth is a brave general who is not naturally inclined to commit evil, but with his deep ambition and wild desire of having more superior position as well as the vigorous influence of his evil wife who always incites him eagerly to have power, he murders the King Duncan against his better judgment and then immerses in guilt and paranoia, pushing him at the end of the play to be a kind of boastful madness. It is no problem that man be ambitious since the latter is the key to success but in the case of Macbeth who as soon as hears that he will be the King of Scotland from the weird sisters, his thoughts turn to be murderous which the sisters have said nothing about but it could awaken within Macbeth a murderous ambition that was inside him:

My thought, whose murder yet is but fantastical,
Shakes so my single state of man that function
Is smother'd in surmise, and nothing is,
But what is not. (1. iii. 139-142).

Furthermore, the ambition of Macbeth is so big that he unconsciously begins in a Machiavellian way to think of murdering the King to replace him, forgetting the terrible consequences of his imminent criminal deed and his friendship to the king who is also his benefactor and kinsman.

Concerning Lady Macbeth, she is one of Shakespeare's most infamous female characters as she exerts a great deal of influence over the events of the play. She is as evil and manipulative as devil whose permanent job is only to push people to do wrong deeds. Her wickedness is even more than that of the witches who only foretell Macbeth of his future because she exerts much effort and a great deal of influence over the events of the play as she is the main instigator in the plot of committing the crime of killing the King of Scotland. It is important to mention that when Macbeth receives the oral letter of the King of promoting him to "Thane of Cawdor" he begins to feel the King's love and honour to him and that the very thing which persuades him to quit his

evil thoughts and then he writes to his wife to ignore "of what greatness is promised thee" (1.v.11) in a message eventually he sends it ahead to his wife who then reads it

LADY MACBETH

They met me in the day of success; and I have learnt
by the perfect'st report, they have more in them than
mortal knowledge. When I burned in desire to question
them further, they made themselves air, into which they
vanished. Whiles I stood rapt in the wonder of it, came
missives from the king, who all-hailed me "Thane of Cawdor";
by which title, before, these weird sisters saulted me, and
referred me to the coming-on of time, with "Hail, king that shalt
be!" This have I though good to deliver thee, my dearest partner
of greatness, that though might'st not lose the dues of rejoicing,
by being ignorant of what greatness is promised thee. Lay it to
thy heart, and farewell. (1.v.1-12)

Thus, Lady Macbeth can be considered a Machiavellian figure because she strives hard for the sake of her personal interest not for the public interest and as soon as she reads the letter which is sent by Macbeth, she suffers none of her husband's uncertainty and at the same time she is inflamed by the idea of Macbeth crowned as well as her greedy spirit immediately drives her into evil which shows that she is more evil, ambitious and hungrier than her husband. In addition, when Macbeth tries to back out of the murder she encourages and instigates him to do the wrong deed of killing the king and usurping his throne of Scotland, hoping that when Macbeth becomes king then she will become the queen. Lady Macbeth knows very well that Macbeth is pure and his nature is "too full o' the milk of human kindness" (1.v. 15) and he will hesitate to do the crime, unless she incites him to do whatever she wants. Meanwhile, King Duncan welcomes and praises Macbeth and Banquo in his palace, and declares that he names his elder son Malcolm as his heir when he addresses his "Sons, kinsmen, thanes,/And you whose places are the nearest, know,/We will establish our estate upon/Our eldest, Malcolm. (1.iv.35-38), then the king turns his face happily to Macbeth telling him:

From hence to

Inverness,

And bind us further to you.

The rest is labour, which is not used for you:

I'll be myself the harbinger, and make joyful

The hearing of my wife with your approach;

So, humbly take my leave. (1.iv.42-47)

This means that the king will spend the night at Macbeth's castle at Inverness, (an area in northern Scotland where Macbeth's castle is situated), to celebrate the victory. As soon as Macbeth hears the praise of the king he feels the love of his kinsman to him and immediately begins to fear the terrible consequences if he commits the crime of killing the king, saying aside: "Stars, hide your fires! /let not light see my black and deep desires". (1.iv. 50-51). Macbeth's speech signifies absolute change in his evil thoughts because now he is ashamed of his impending bad deed and this shows that even evil knows very well that hurting people is something shameful. Later on Macbeth sends a messenger to his wife to inform her that "Duncan comes here to-night" (1.v.28). She is so corrupted by the desire for power that as soon as she hears the message, she becomes very happy, saying that death is near and the air is so full of death that the raven is hoarse with croaking. Moreover, she ignores her husband as a real man and instead calls the evil spirits to take her womanhood as an image of tenderness:

The raven himself is hoarse
 That croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan
 Under my battlements. Come, you spirits
 That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,
 And fill me from the crown to the toe top-full
 Of direst cruelty! (1.v. 36-41).

Eventually, Macbeth reaches his castle and he personally tells his wife that "Duncan comes here to-night"(1.v.58). As soon as Lady Macbeth makes sure that the

king will be in their castle tonight, her evil spirit deplores the fact that Macbeth is virtuous, despite his ambition and he just "look like the innocent flower" (1.v.63), recommending him to "be the serpent under 't"(1.v.64)., So, she eagerly wants to change him to be evil but Macbeth still rejects the idea of committing the crime against the king due to his purity and bravery which prevent him from hurting his guest, explaining aside:

He's here in double trust:

First, as I am his kinsman and his subject,
Strong both against the deed; then, as his host,
Who should against his murderer shut the door,
Not bear the knife myself. (1.vii.12-16).

Lady Macbeth is just like Cassius, in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* who is the moving spirit of the conspiracy to assassin Caesar. The conspiracy comprises Casca, Cicero, Metallus Cimber, Cinna, and others convince Brutus who is an indispensable noble man and Caesar's closest friend to join the plot because Brutus is honored and well-beloved by the Romans.

Moreover, she does not only show a total disregard for all her husband's objections but she insists that Macbeth must commit the sin of killing his guest while sleeping in their castle at night make her husband be at war with himself that he thinks a lot of the terrible consequences if he commits the crime that every success he achieves will go in vain, thus he decides to tell his bloodthirsty wife who was waiting eagerly for him to hear the good news of killing the King that they should "proceed no further in this business" (1.vii.36). But Macbeth's speech doesn't affect her because her cruel heart seeks nothing but getting the crown through murdering Duncan, forgetting the terrible consequences such as cruelty, chaos, and darkness which will be prevailed among people who always pay the price of their rulers' blunders from their sons' blood. Thus, she proceeds with urging Macbeth not to hesitate " But screw your courage to the sticking-place (Duncan's heart) (1.vii. 60). The Insistence, resolution, and influence of

Lady Macbeth on her husband are so great that push Macbeth to do the wrong deed. Accordingly, he submits to his lady and then they plan together to get Duncan's two chamberlains drunk so that they will lose conscience; the next morning they will accuse the chamberlains for the murder. They will be defenseless, as they will remember nothing. Macbeth also murders the other guards. In fact he kills them to prevent them from claiming their innocence and this is a Machiavellian principle that he should hide his crime by hitting all those who know about his guilt with one "stroke" according to one of Machiavellian principles.

After committing the sins of murdering the King, chamberlains and guards, Macbeth's tragedy is begun and he feels discomfort and thus he will "Sleep no more!" (II.ii.34). Unlike Shakespeare's other great villains, such as Iago in *Othello* and Richard III in *Richard III*, who revel in their villainy, Macbeth is never comfortable in his role as a criminal because he is obliged to do wrong due to the insistence of his wicked and greedy lady and his ambition by depending on the witches' prophecy without being able to justify the crimes to himself and it might be because he is a decent and brave man at the beginning of the play and psychologically speaking such a man is designed not to hurt people but to help them. Thus, he suffers the pricks of conscience and is unable to bear the psychic consequences of his atrocities and he begins to hallucinate as he frequently hears the voice of his deep conscience, telling him "Sleep no more!" (II.ii.40).

Lady Macbeth tries to treat Macbeth's guilty hallucinations with possible palliative, that he cannot change the past, so as she thinks he should forget about it:

How now, my lord, why do you keep alone,
Of sorriest fancies your companions making,
Using those thoughts which should indeed have died
With them they think on? Things without all remedy
Should be without regard: what's done, is done. (III. ii. 8-12)

Though Lady Macbeth tries to soothe her husband, ironically she herself succumbs to guilty dreams, Sleepwalking, and she also experiences hallucinations too: "Here's the smell of blood still: All the perfumes of Arabia/ will not sweeten this little hand. Oh!

Oh! Oh!" (V.i.40). Moreover, she mutters to Macbeth "What's done cannot be undone" (V. i. 55). Lady Macbeth pursues her goals with greater determination, yet is less capable of dealing with the guilt from her immorality. Yet, she herself eventually is driven to death by the effect of Macbeth's murders on her conscience and it might be by the pricks of conscience. In each case, ambition, spurred by the prophecies of the witches, is what drives the couple to commit their atrocity. An issue that the play raises is that once one decides to use violence to further one's quest for power, it is difficult to stop.

Eventually, Macbeth begins to suffer from paranoia and worries due to his regicide that lead him to be doubtful of those surrounding him that he finds that there are always potential threats to the throne such as Banquo, Fleance, and Macduff, thus, he begins to think of using violent means to dispose of them. Starting with his tyranny, Macbeth feels unsafe until Banquo, a truly noble and gracious soldier, is dead and can no longer influence the minds of the people against their ruler "We have scorched the snake, not killed it." (III.ii.12). Later on, Macbeth tries to soothe the confused situation in his kingdom and he invites Banquo to a royal feast, where he discovers that Banquo and his young son, Fleance, will leave the kingdom that night. Therefore, he hires two men to kill them and the assassins succeed in killing Banquo, but Fleance escapes the very thing makes Macbeth furious; as long as Fleance is alive. Furthermore, Banquo's ghost enters and sits in Macbeth's place. Macbeth raves fearfully when he looks at an empty chair, asking the ghost "Thou canst not say I did it. Never shake/ Thy glory locks at me". (III. iv. 50-51). By doing so, Macbeth startles his guests, as the ghost is only visible to him and this situation has embarrassed the now desperate Lady Macbeth who immediately tells them that her husband is merely afflicted with a familiar and harmless malady," Sit, worthy friends. My lord is often thus, /And hath been from his youth: pray you keep seat" (III.iv.53-54). Then, the ghost departs and returns once more, causing the same riotous anger in Macbeth. This time, Lady Macbeth tells the lords to leave, and they do so.

Being confused, Macbeth visits once again the weird witches in order to know what the future has in store for him especially after the escape of Fleance. The witches called forth three horrible apparitions. The first was an armed head, which warns Macbeth to beware of Macduff "Macbeth! Macbeth! Macbeth! Beware Macduff; (IV. i. 71). The second apparition is bloody child, who described men born of women as powerless against Macbeth, and the third was a crowned child holding a tree states that Macbeth will be safe until Great Birnam Wood comes to Dunsinane Hill. However, Macbeth is relieved and feels secure as he knows that all men are born of women and forests cannot move. Macbeth also asks if Banquo's sons will ever reign in Scotland, the witches invoke a procession of eight crowned kings, all similar in appearance to Banquo, and the last carrying a mirror that reflects even more kings. Macbeth realizes that these are all Banquo's descendants having acquired kingship in numerous countries. After the witches perform a mad dance and leave, Lennox (nobleman of Scotland) enters and tells Macbeth that Macduff has fled to England. Proceeding in his tyranny, Macbeth orders Macduff's castle to be seized and most cruelly, sends murderers to slaughter Macduff's family. As a result, everyone in Macduff's castle is put to death, including Lady Macduff and her young son to secure his power.

In England, Macduff is informed by Rosse that his "castle is surprised; [his] wife and babes / Savagely slaughter'd" (IV. iii. 204-5), thus, Macduff is stricken with grief and vows revenge. Prince Malcolm, Duncan's son, has succeeded in raising an army in England, and Macduff joins him as he rides to Scotland to challenge Macbeth's forces. The invasion has the support of the Scottish nobles, who are appalled and frightened by Macbeth's tyrannical and murderous behavior. Malcolm leads an army, along with Macduff and Siward (the Earl of Northumberland and an ally of Malcolm and Macduff). While encamped in Birnam Wood, the soldiers are ordered by Malcolm to cut down and carry tree limbs to camouflage their numbers and thus the third prophecy is achieved as a messenger tells Macbeth that "The wood began to move" (V.v.35), thus Macbeth's doom is impending. Furthermore and before Macbeth's opponents

arrive, he receives news that Lady Macbeth has killed herself, causing him to sink into a deep and pessimistic despair and mourns her death, repeating:

Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow

Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,
To the last syllable of recorded time;
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!
Life 's but a walking shadow. (V.v.19-24).

Despite the fact that Macbeth reflects on the brevity and meaninglessness of life, he nevertheless awaits the English and fortifies Dunsinane.⁸ Macbeth is certain that the witches' prophecies cannot be defeated, but he is struck numb with fear when he learns that the English army is advancing on Dunsinane shielded with boughs cut from Birnam Wood. Birnam Wood is indeed coming to Dunsinane, fulfilling half of the witches' prophecy. The battle culminates in the slaying of the young Siward and Macduff's confrontation with Macbeth, and the English forces overwhelm his army and castle. Macbeth boasts that he has no reason to fear Macduff, for he cannot be killed by any man born of woman. Macduff declares that he was "from his mother's womb / Untimely ripp'd" (V. viii. 15–16). Macbeth realizes too late that he has misinterpreted the witches' words. Though he realizes that he is doomed, he continues to fight Macduff who later on kills and beheads him. Eventually, Malcolm becomes the King of Scotland and he then declares his benevolent intentions for the country and invites all to see him crowned at Scone. Although Malcolm, and not Fleance, is placed on the throne, the witches' prophecy concerning Banquo ("Thou shalt get kings") was known to the audience of Shakespeare's time to be true: James VI of Scotland (later also [James I of England](#)) was supposedly a descendant of Banquo.

Furthermore, one of Machiavelli's principles that Macbeth fails to fulfill is that "a prince should have no other object, nor any other thought, nor take anything else as his art but the art of war and its orders and discipline..." (Ibid). This points back to the literal translation of Machiavelli's comment that crime-engendered princes who

prolong their violence are incapable of maintaining themselves. While this belief may also incorporate some early, unexposed notion of guilt, it is quite clear that it also refers to the prince's inability to think upon, practice, and develop the art of war. Macbeth is incapable of thinking about anything other than his own self-preservation and guilt at having committed so many murders, and is therefore unable to pursue Machiavelli's principle. This, however, is not to say that Macbeth portrays no Machiavellian characteristics. Before he kills Duncan to become King, he was a great soldier and had just defeated Norway and the Thane of Cawdor. All throughout his rule as King, his soldiers fear him. While Machiavelli believes that it is better to be both feared and loved (and thus gain the respect of your people and military) (Ibid). although Macbeth most probably held the respect of his soldiers before becoming king, he continued to hold their fear throughout his rule, thereby meeting Machiavelli's advice.

Notes

- ١- Hugh Grady, *Shakespeare, Machiavelli, and Montaigne: Power and Subjectivity from Richard II to Hamlet*, (Oxford, 2002), p. 30.
- ٢- Niccoló Machiavelli, *The Prince*. 1537.
- ٣- John Roe, *Shakespeare and Machiavelli* (Cambridge, 2002) p. 15.
- ٤- Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince* (London, 2004), p. 65.
- ٥- William Shakespeare, *Macbeth* (London, Longmans, Green & and Co. Ltd, 1958 and 1960) p.15. All subsequent textual quotations and references which will appear in my paper within parentheses in the text are based on this reference book. All spellings are kept as in the original.
- ٦- G.B. Harrison, *Shakespeare's Tragedies* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1966), p.18.
- ٧- Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince* (London, 2004), p.65.
- ٨- Dunsinane is a fortress on a hill near the village of Collace in Perthshire, Scotland. In the play, it first metions Inverness as Macbeth's castle. Later in the book he is at Dunsinane, where he gets attacked and killed by Macduff, Malcolm, and their armies.
- ٩- Muir, Kenneth, ed. (1984) [1951] *Macbeth*. The Arden Shakespeare, Second Series, 11th ed., p. xxxvi.