

# KINGSHIP DESACRALIZATION AND NATIONAL DESTALIZATION IN WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S *MACBETH*

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## **Abstract**

*This paper is meant to highlight the esthetics of Scottish kingship sacrality and the consequences of questioning the sacredness of the British monarchical succession tradition through regicide and usurpation of throne in the context of Shakespeare's tragedy Macbeth. It is a well-known fact that the British monarch is invested with divine power to rule his kingdom, and that killing, deposing or dethroneing the king illegally constitutes a desacralization of royal power, which is not without physical and metaphysical drawbacks. Leaning on semiotics as a literary approach based on the interpretation of signs and symbols artificially constructed by the writer to exemplify social issues through syntactics, semantics and pragmatics, the paper comes to the result that Scottish monarchy in the context of Shakespeare's Macbeth, is divinely ordained and the disruption of the divine order through the usurpation of King Duncan's power by general Macbeth, constitutes a desacralization of kingship power, which is the cause of chaos and instability in the play, making it a great tragedy until the restoration of the normal order.*

**Keywords:** *kingship, sacrality, stability, desacralization, instability.*

## **Résumé**

*Cet article vise à apprécier l'esthétique de la sacralité de la royauté écossaise et les conséquences de la remise en question du caractère sacré de la tradition de succession monarchique britannique à travers le régicide et l'usurpation du trône dans le contexte de la tragédie de Shakespeare, intitulée Macbeth. Sachant que le monarque britannique est investi du pouvoir divin pour gouverner son royaume, le tuer, le déposer ou le détronner illégalement constitue une désacralisation du pouvoir royal et n'est pas sans inconvénients physiques et métaphysiques. S'appuyant sur la sémiotique en tant qu'approche littéraire basée sur l'interprétation des signes et des symboles construits artificiellement par l'écrivain pour illustrer les problèmes sociaux à travers la syntaxe, la sémantique et la pragmatique, l'article parvient au résultat que la monarchie écossaise, dans le contexte de la pièce Macbeth de Shakespeare, est divinement ordonnée, et la perturbation de l'ordre divin à travers l'usurpation du pouvoir du roi Duncan par le général Macbeth, constitue une désacralisation du pouvoir de la royauté, qui est la cause du chaos et de l'instabilité générale dans la pièce, faisant d'elle une grande tragédie jusqu'au rétablissement du pouvoir monarchique.*

**Mots-clés :** *royauté, sacralité, stabilité, désacralisation, instabilité.*

## Introduction

As a matter of fact, the United Kingdom of Great Britain is a multidentenary kingdom which began with the rule of Alfred the Great in ninth century over Wessex one of the seven Anglo-Saxon kingdoms which made up the modern England. According to the time-honoured British traditions and rules of succession, it is the duty of the monarch to rule until death. However, it is possible for the king or queen to abdicate the throne with the consent of the British parliament and the parliaments of other nations of the British Empire that recognize him or her as the Head of State.

Therefore, the British monarchy is one of the oldest and most flexible institution in the world. Notwithstanding, the British monarchy is a hereditary institution, on the death of the sovereign the crown is passed to the eldest son or the eldest daughter in case there is no son. Symbolically, the sovereign is the embodiment of the idea of national unity and stability. This symbolism of British monarchy is sustained throughout centuries by the British conservatism and deference. Above all, to be a king or a queen in United Kingdom, one needs necessarily to belong to a royal family in power. The British royal families account for the Windsors, the Tudors, the Hanovers, the Plantagenets and the Scottish royal family, the Stuarts.

However, Shakespeare's play *Macbeth* which sets in Scotland breaks the time-honoured rule of succession whereby, Macbeth the tragic hero who is no member of the British royal family in power, usurps the power of the sovereign through a regicide. This issue of power usurpation, creates much trouble in Shakespeare's play *Macbeth* making it one of his great tragedies. This play of *Macbeth* which started with a happy mood showing the hero Macbeth's ascension to greatness, ends up sorrowfully with a sad mood leaving the fictional Scotland in a pool of blood. The rationale behind this issue of power usurpation is that whenever Shakespeare creates this situation of power infringement or desecration, he makes sure the authors of the disturbance of the normal order are punished and removed from the British society through death penalty, which means that Shakespeare surely advocates the rule of law and order incarnated in the British monarchy.

Eventually, this paper intends to shed light on the strategies put in place by the playwright to highlight the sacrality of Scottish kingship reflected in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, showing how the damage or breach or desecration of the royal power can cause national instability through the actions of the unlawful royal power usurpers.

Backed up by semiotic literary approach, the study aims to achieve the result that the Scottish royal power desacralization in the play *Macbeth* through the killing of the king and the usurpation of his throne tantamount to breaking the chain of being which results to terrible physical and metaphysical judgements on the land and people of Scotland before the restoration of the normal order.

Structurally speaking, the study will first emphasize the sacredness of British kingship power, then show the way this sacredness of this British kingship power is violated by Macbeth, the tragic hero in the play, and finally highlight the consequences of Macbeth's power desacralization in the play titled *Macbeth*.

## **1. Sacredness of Kingship in the United Kingdom**

According to Figgis (1965, p. 5), the divine right theory can be summarized in four succinct propositions. On the first place, one should know that the institution of British kingship is divinely ordained. Secondly, it is a fact that to God alone are kings held to be accountable. Thirdly, the theory is that on pain of eternal punishment God enjoins all the subjects, the twin duties of passive obedience and non-resistance. Fourthly, it is a belief commonly accepted that the hereditary right of succession to the throne stemming from birth into the legitimate royal line is under no circumstances subject to forfeiture. As a right, that is to say, heredity regulated by primogeniture is indefeasible.

King James' *Speech to the Lords and Commons of the Parliament at White-Hall* (1610) is adequately representative of these views and has the added advantage of being no less helpfully succinct than forcefully compelling. Therefore, having warmed up his audience with an outline of the topics he intended to address, James launched into his discourse with the following words: "the state of MONARCHY," is the supremest thing on earth. For Kings are not only GODS Lieutenants upon earth, and sit upon GOD's throne, but even by GOD himself they are called Gods. Indeed, King James' speech in 1610 encapsulates the sacralization and

divination of a king's throne and power. Kings are God's representatives on earth, kings are godsent, their powers cannot be questioned by people they rule. There can be good kings, there can be bad kings; but they are all the same accountable to God and not to human beings.

As a king, the king is the representative of God. In *Macbeth* (Act IV, Scene iii, Lines 108-109) when dealing with the sacrality of kingship, Macduff, a Scottish nobleman, informs Malcolm that the devilish Macbeth, the military General has blasphemed the sainthood of king Duncan's royalty. Talking of the divine nature of kings, Oakley (2006, p. 129) argues that kings are justly called Gods, because they exercise a manner or resemblance of Divine power upon earth. For just as God hath power to create, or destroy, make, or unmake at his pleasure, to give life, or send death, to judge all and not to be judged nor to be accountable to none, so, too, do kings. The kings are accountable to none but God, they have the power to make and unmake their subjects, to exalt low things, and abase high things, and make of their subjects like men at the Chesse.

Moreover, the sacredness of British kings is also demonstrated through the ritual coronation at Westminster Abbey. Indeed, according to Mehounou and others (2017), by being crowned according to the rites of their ancestor Edgar (959-975), grand-nephew of King Alfred and the first recognized king of England, not only monarchs continue an old century-long tradition of the English monarchy, but above all this gives them a sacred character.

As the theorist Gerholm (1988, p. 201) observes: "...we could say that for understanding the historical development of a ritual, it is just as important to understand its social setting as to construct a symbolic system of which the ritual is a manifestation." Shakespeare knowing and advocating the sacredness of the ritual during the coronation ceremony, puts forth the relevance of the coronation setting whereby the rituals unfold in *Macbeth*. In fact, he has this incorporated in his fictional world, symbolizing "Westminster Abbey" by a sacred place called "Scone": Act 2, Scene 4 / Act 5, Scene 8.

Additionally, the ritual cycle of a reign was framed by the ceremonies of coronation and funeral, whilst the cycle of the royal year was filled with a mixed variety of fixed and occasional ritualized activities that included pilgrimages, royal progressions, formal entries into towns, tournaments and rituals associated with the major religious feasts. Queens operated within the same ritual environment as kings, although they were also the

focus of discrete ceremonies of their own such as churching after childbirth. Staniland (1987, p. 300)

Kertzer (1988, p. 67) makes us understand that, “Ritual can serve political organizations by producing bonds of solidarity without requiring uniformity of belief.” This statement means that rituals are customs which establish collective and strong convictions within political institutions like the United Kingdom of Great Britain.

In his *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, Durkheim according to Bell (1992, p. 175) argues that ritual operates as a harmonizing mechanism within religious life, promoting a sense of social solidarity between worshippers. The function of ritual, is that each ritual is a mechanism for the coercive maintenance of social control. Likewise, rituals consist of beliefs, creeds, symbols, and myths which emerge as forms of mental content or conceptual blueprints: they direct, inspire, or promote activity, but they themselves are not activities. However, the administration of the coronation oath is followed by a long series of hymns and prayers preparatory to the consecration of the king. These hymns and prayers reference Biblical precedents for the anointment of kings and express a desire that the benefits of peace, justice and Christian faith should accrue to the people through the grace of the Lord and the qualities of the king. A king should take place under a canopy (pallio) before the high altar.

Bindoff (1961, p. 123) believes that, from its mythical character with what it embodies, ritual is a solid cement for national unity and thus has a considerable impact on the popular mentality, which means that British coronation rituals beacon the sacredness of British kingship.

Mehounou and others (2017, p. 11) sustain that the sacredness of royal power emanates partly from the effort historians and theologians of royalty vigorously deploy to demonstrate the divine and mythical character of the royal power and this no doubt contributes greatly to the survival of the English monarchy.

## **2. Desacralization of Kingship in the Play**

It is obvious that kingship and sacrality of power are intrinsically linked within the play of *Macbeth*. The possibility of ascending the throne is the driving force behind the motivations of of Macbeth the tragic hero. Shakespeare contrasts the way Macbeth behaves towards this possibility of getting to power, and also how he acts once he gains it through illegal

and blasphemous methods. He contrasts the behaviour of Duncan, a legitimate and good king with that of Macbeth, an illegitimate and tyrannical king.

As a matter of fact, Duncan possesses all the qualities of a great king: he is noble, nurturing, responsible, and a strong leader. His successful reign emphasizes how disastrous Macbeth is as a king. Duncan is shown to be a just and benevolent ruler demonstrating important aspects of kingship by telling his court, "*Signs of nobleness like stars shall shine / On all deservers. From hence to Inverness,*" (Act I, Scene iv, Lines 41-42), meaning that Duncan is a good king whose reign will last for evermore. Duncan will reign till death according to British succession tradition. The line can be also interpreted that virtue and nobility are visible traits in Duncan as a legitimate king. The simile "*like stars shall shine*" connotes divine power, meaning that Duncan's power comes from above just as stars shine on earth from above. It aligns "*deservers*" with legitimacy and God, a proof that kingship is divinely ordained.

Duncan is portrayed as someone who is invested with divine power to rule his followers successfully, as he says, "*I have begun to plant thee and will labour / To make thee full of growing,*" (Act I, Scene iv, Lines 28-29). These lines emphasize Duncan's dedication to the improvement and success of his people. He seems to say that his growing power will be profitable to all the people in the kingdom. The semantic field of agriculture connotes new life and nourishment, birth, growth, fruitfulness, abundance and prosperity of the kingdom through Duncan as a nurturing and considerate king.

Duncan is such a successful monarch that even those who seek to kill him admire the way he rules. Macbeth the potential murderer of King Duncan, outlines Duncan's honourable qualities as he says: "*Hath borne his faculties someeek, hath been / So clear in his great office, that his virtues / Will plead like angels, trumpet-tongued, against / The deep damnation of his taking-off,*" (Act I, Scene vii, Lines 17-21).

Thereby Macbeth acknowledges that Duncan is a virtuous king who will be avenged by his own virtues when dethroned (Act 1, Scene 7). The semiotic analysis of the lines suggests that whoever usurps Duncan's power will face terrible judgements from heaven above and from the people down in the kingdom, Duncan's good deeds will have to avenge him.

Thus, Shakespeare shows how Duncan governs fairly to do what is right for his country. He rewards those who do good, as he is telling Macbeth, *"More is thy due than more than all can pay,"* (Act I, Scene iv, Line 21). At the same time, he punishes traitors, ordering the execution of the Thane of Cawdor for his acts of treason: *"Go pronounce his present death / And with his former title great Macbeth,"* (Act I, Scene iv, Line 72).

This exchange of *"title[s]"* at the beginning of the play presents the audience with a country that is stable and balanced. Duncan's court appears to be the pinnacle of justice. Duncan's kingdom is unquestionably peaceful and stable. The social hierarchization and deference are undoubtedly primordial factors of the survival of the monarchy in England. English society is one of the most hierarchical and more stable in the world.

However, the scene of exchanging titles also foreshadows Macbeth's betrayal of king Duncan's legitimacy, which stands for the Desacralization of Scottish kingship in the United Kingdom of Great Britain in the play. Duncan's loss of his title in favour of Macbeth constitutes the usurpation and Desacralization of the Scottish royal power in the play.

According to the time-honoured British traditions and rules of succession, King Duncan has to rule for life and when he dies, his son Malcolm will ensure the continuity of the royal power as stated in the British constitution. In fact, it is a good news that the king has an heir. Indeed, the Jacobean audience would have known the trouble that a monarch dying without an heir would have created trouble. Elizabeth I died without an heir which resulted in a big change to the way Britain was ruled by her successor. So, by providing the country with an heir, Duncan was ensuring political stability and security. He announces that his son Malcolm will be his heir: *"We will establish our estate upon / Our eldest, Malcolm"* (Act I, Scene iv, Lines 37-38).

Shakespeare thus establishes Duncan as a trustworthy king and provides a vision of a safe future. However, this sacred order is soon to be ruined by Macbeth an intruder who breaks the chain of being out of inordinate ambition to be a king at all costs.

Therefore, Macbeth will play on Duncan's trusting nature to betray him and abuse his royal power. It seems that Duncan is too trusting and dependent on others to be a perfect king. Rather than leading his

men into battle he trusts others to do so for him, and he relies heavily on his Thanes Banquo and Macbeth to help maintain order.

When he reflects on the previous Thane of Cawdor's death, he says, "*There's no art / To find the mind's construction in the face. / He was a gentleman on whom I built / An absolute trust,*" (Act I, Scene iv, Lines 12-13). He had placed his total confidence in a man who betrayed him to foreign armies, suggesting that he has a poor judgement of character. There is some dramatic irony in this statement, for Macbeth is plotting to murder him at the time Duncan confides in him unreservedly.

Macbeth is among Duncan's trusted Thanes and is called his "*valiant cousin, worthy gentleman*" (Act I, Scene ii, Lines 24). This means the betrayal repeats itself and Duncan does not learn from his mistakes. Duncan's naivety and gullibility constitute his tragic flaws that will crush him down through Macbeth's mannerisms.

However, the line "*There's no art / To find the mind's construction in the face*" implies that it is impossible to see someone's deception through physical appearance. Shakespeare suggests that the evil and treachery of others appear imperceptible to the naked eyes. In other words, appearance is deceitful, the evil heart is not easily noticeable. Kindness and respect are vulnerable to deceit. In theory, Duncan would be the perfect king, but in reality he cannot contend with the wickedness of his peers.

At the start of the play, Macbeth has the ideal qualities of a noble king. In Act I, Scene ii, he was admired by King Duncan who talks about him as: 'valiant cousin', 'worthy gentleman'; the Sergeant calls him, 'brave Macbeth', 'valour's minion'; Ross refers to him as *Bellona's bridegroom.* Thus, he was associated with attributes of bravery and courage showing how admirable, impressive and loyal Macbeth used to be. "*Brave*", "*valour*", "*minion*" all imply that he is loyal beyond a strength of character which he displays in battle as a military leader. This makes it ironic that he later commits the cowardly act of murdering Duncan in his sleep, a legitimate noble king loved and appreciated in the whole kingdom of Scotland.

However, these noble traits seem to disappear as Macbeth becomes closer to the throne and becomes corrupt, blinded by kingship power. By the time he kills Duncan and takes the throne, his transformation is so complete; it is too late for him to go back to being the noble Macbeth



the audience was introduced to at the start of the play. Henceforth, the audience is able to see the direct contrast between the way Duncan and Macbeth rule Britain. In terms of kingship lineage, Macbeth is the least successful king in the play. His ascension to the throne is illegal, unscrupulous and unethical as he gets there through the use of violence, murder, lies, and betrayal. He is not the rightful heir, yet he commits a regicide to be king as prophesied by the three Witches in the play. This regicide shows that Macbeth does not care for the welfare of Scotland; he only cares for himself, he just wants royal power. Indeed, power blindness, egocentrism and megalomania push him to destabilize a peaceful kingdom. Through Macbeth's usurpation of the throne, Shakespeare explores how power corrupts the minds of men, and how impactful a king's reign is on his whole country. He studies what it would truly be like to have a tyrant on the throne and how power draws out people's violent human nature. About the abuse of power, the 19<sup>th</sup> century English historian Lord Acton (1834-1902) argues that power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely.

The Act II, Scene iv of *Macbeth* highlights the fact that Macbeth has become king illegally and disrupted the chain of being as 'an owl kills a falcon.' Metaphorically, Duncan, the king of Scotland stands for the falcon which symbolizes majesty and power whereas Macbeth stands for the owl which symbolizes wisdom and intelligence. This means that Macbeth uses cunningness and mischief to kill someone who is more powerful and more important than him.

Macbeth, the tragic hero begins the play as a noble figure; he has magnificently fought for the Scottish kingdom and its king, the saintly Duncan, against rebels. But he soon departs from the noble Aristotelian model of the tragic hero's greatness, and becomes infected and debased by the evil of overambition which eventually reveals his essential tragic flaws. The combination of three Witches prophesying that he will be king, his wife prompting him to murder Duncan, and Duncan's decision to spend a night at Macbeth's castle at the very time when the pressure to murder Duncan was greatest, proves too much for Macbeth. He kills Duncan, and then suffers agonies until he is finally killed by Macduff, a Scottish nobleman whose family Macbeth massacred when he was king. As do the history plays, *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, and *Macbeth* confirm that usurpation of power is a major sin, punishable as the turmoil arises in the country and the the usurper eventually dies as a result. Indeed, Macbeth's

death stands as the ultimate sentence and the capital punishment for the crimes he has committed.

The sinful ambition to usurp the throne of a legitimate king is the major source of the tragic events that unfold in Shakespeare's tragic plays, from the beginning till the end. The three weird Witches are the main motives that rouse that ambition inside Macbeth's mind to usurp the throne of King Duncan of Scotland. Lady Macbeth is another major source that makes Macbeth commit an ugly crime, a regicide in order to achieve his dirty ambition of becoming a king. He is excitably ambitious and his illegal and senseless ambition gradually motivates and encourages him to commit a number of brutal and horrible actions. In this regard, his ambition to get kingship transfers him from a brave leader to a despicable tyrant who desacralizes the British royal succession tradition. Thus, these factors are the major motives that Shakespeare uses to portray the brutal nature of power desacralization of kingship and the chaos and destruction that result from the struggle for illegal monarchical power.

### **3.National Destabilization in the Play**

In Muslim tradition, as Ström (1964, p. 702) argues, there is a belief that, the person of the caliph is a support of the order of the universe. If he were killed the entire universe would lapse into disorder, the sun would hide its face, rain would cease, and plants would grow no more. This Muslim traditional belief is similar to the British traditional belief that, when the ruler is killed, judgements should follow to show the disagreement of supernatural forces with the society which questions the divine order.

Royalty indeed, has its origin in divinity itself, it is God who makes kings and establishes reigning houses, the royal throne is not the throne of a man, but something less than the throne of God. Oakley (2006, p. 130) states that royal judgments, are to be attributed to God himself and not human beings. No human coercive force should run against kings, nor do they have to account to anyone but God himself for what in the height of their majesty they choose to do.

Armstrong (1965, p. 77) argues that, a king is judge over all by God's appointment; and none may him judge again but the Lord Himself: in this the sculpture is plain. He that condemns a king, condemns God without doubt; he that harms a king, harms God. He that resists the

prince, doth damn God's ordinance; and resists God in withdrawing his affiance. All subjects offending are under the king's judgment: a king is reserved to the Lord omnipotent. He is a minister immediate under God, of his righteousness to execute the rod.

Despite all these railings and guidelines that ensure the safety of a king's rule, Macbeth who is not able to do better than king Duncan, dares to challenge him and take the throne which is, by no means, his inheritance. Therefore, Macbeth is the complete opposite of Duncan, both in the way he comes to be king and also in the way he rules the kingdom of Scotland. Metaphorically, Shakespeare uses this play to exemplify the impact of a King's reign on his country, which is nothing but national unity or national stability.

The audience is not given much insight into other peoples' opinions of Macbeth's leadership. However, as the soldiers prepare for battle, we hear reports of how *"those he commands, move only in command, / Nothing in love"* (Act V, Scene ii, Lines 19-20), and *"none serve him but constrained things / Whose hearts are absent too"* (Act V, Scene iv, Lines 13-14). This shows how unsuccessful the illegitimate king Macbeth has been at maintaining peace, harmony, order and trust in his people. His country has no *"love"* or *"heart"* which is representative of his own callous nature and the state in which he plunges the kingdom of Scotland. A semiotic examination of these lines shows that Macbeth rules by force without the consent and complicity of the people in the kingdom of Scotland. The rule of law is nowhere to be seen again, dictatorship has overruled legitimacy in the kingdom.

Macbeth himself acknowledges his ability to control others using violent means by saying: *"I could with my barefaced power sweep him from my sight, / And bid my will avouch it, yet I must not,"* (Act II, Scene i, Lines 119-120). This happens when he was pondering what to do about Banquo. Semiotically, *"Barefaced"* implies he could be shameless and outright in his murderous ways, while *"sweep him from my sight"* connotes a godlike or absolute control over reality, which means that Macbeth has lost human kindness that used to prevail in the kingdom. Macbeth is sold to evil and corrupted by royal power.

Unlike Duncan, Macbeth's poor kingship is solidified by his lack of lineage and heirs. It is evident that he feels emasculated by his inability to produce an heir, this is represented through his jealousy of Banquo whose sons will be kings according to the prophecy of the Witches

whom he resents. Remembering the Witches' prophecy for Banquo, he complains, "*They hailed him father to a line of kings. / Upon my head they placed a fruitless crown / And put a barren sceptre in my gripe, / Thence to be wrenched with an unlineal hand, / No son of mine succeeding,*" (Act III, Scene i, Lines 59-63). He resents Banquo because his sons will be kings, and he resents the Witches for making him king without a possibility of successors.

The reaction to Duncan's death compared to Macbeth's death is reflective of how both kings ruled, and how they were viewed by their countrymen. The impact each death has on the environment expresses Shakespeare's views on kingship and tyranny. He believes a legal and good monarch is needed to provide stability, security, and progress.

Duncan's death seems to bring about a sort of apocalyptic chaos in the kingdom, showing how atrocious and distressing his murder is. The way the atmosphere is described even before Duncan's death has been discovered, implies that even nature is affected by his murder. Lennox reports:

The night has been unruly / Our chimneys were  
blown down ; and as they say, / Lamentings heard i'  
the air ; strange screams of death/ And prophesying  
with accents terrible / Of dire combustion and  
confus'd events, / New hatch'd to the woeful time.  
/The obscure bird / Clamour'd the livelong night : /  
Some say, the earth was feverous and did shake (Act  
II, Scene iii, Lines 55-61.3).

The lexicon from the semantic field of chaos and destruction, such as "*dire combustion*", "*clamour'd*", and "*shake*", reflects how Duncan's murder has even destabilized the natural peace and quietude. It semiotically symbolizes God's expression of anger and wrath at being defied by Macbeth who creates a disequilibrium in his chain of being.

Moreover, "*feverous*" connotes disease, suggesting that Macbeth's hideous deed has brought about sickness to the land of Scotland that used to be peaceful and harmonious.

The symbols "*Lamentings*", "*strange screams of death*", and "*prophesying*" are evidences of the consequences stemming from Macbeth's murder of the King as the Witches predicted in Act I, Scene 7 on the echoing of grief and "*tears*".

Once the king's body is discovered, Ross observes: "By th'clock 'tis day / And yet dark night strangles the travelling lamp. / Is't night's predominance, or the day's shame, / That darkness does the face of earth entomb / When living light should kiss it?" (Act II, Scene iv, Lines 5-8). These lines literally mean that Duncan's death has had a permanent effect on the weather and the daylight. The "*dark night*" symbolizes the wickedness that now dominates the world, Macbeth's murder of Duncan has brought gloom and doom on the country. The reference to "*th'clock*", "*day*" and "*night*" implies even the time itself has stopped. The semantic field of death and murder, "strangles", "entomb", "*living*", proves Duncan's death has impacted the whole world, so that everything is murderous or tainted by decay; the harmony in nature is disrupted giving room to chaos.

Shakespeare suggests that Duncan's death disrupts the whole natural order. The Old Man remarks to Ross, "*'Tis unnatural, / Even like the deed that's done. On Tuesday last, / A falcon tow'ring in her pride of place / Was by a mousing owl hawked at and killed,*" (Act II, Scene iv, Lines 10-13). "*Like the deed that's done*" implies the state of the world, nature has been altered to mirror the villainy of the murder. Just as a good monarch improves the health, the sanity of his country, the killing of the monarch shifts the whole country into dire decay and total despair.

The "*falcon*" is a mighty bird of prey, symbolizing Duncan, while a "*mouse owl*" is a less impressive predator who would normally be inferior to the falcon. The incident is therefore an omen of what was to come, with Macbeth wrongfully killing the king, who is above him in the natural divine order of things.

Duncan's corpse is described with allusions to piety and royalty, reflecting how the death of a king is the death of God's chosen representative on earth. Macduff describes the crime scene, "*Confusion now hath made his masterpiece: / Most sacrilegious murder hath broke ope / The Lord's anointed temple and stole thence / The life o'th'building,*" (Act II, Scene iii, Lines 66- 69).

The adjective "*sacrilegious*" alludes to the divine right of kings and connotes that Duncan's death is a scandal. Duncan's body is also described as "*The Lord's anointed temple*", conveying his sanctity and importance.

By presenting Duncan's corpse as a "temple" made of "silver" and "gold", Shakespeare implies that Duncan was not a mere human being, but an incarnation of God. This also means the qualities of a Duncan go beyond his manhood. Duncan as a good king can be identified from his very form and essence. Duncan's being constitutes a precious metal that Macbeth has wasted away.

In contrast, Macbeth's death is celebrated by his subjects, and presented as a moment of liberation for Scotland he plunged into a wretched misery. While Duncan is portrayed with angelic and godlike attributes, Macbeth is referred to as a "bell-bound" (Act V, Scene viii) and a "dead butcher and his fiend-like queen" (Act V, Scene ix). All this terminology denotes and connotes the evil nature of Macbeth and his evil-instigating wife Lady Macbeth.

The expression "bell-bound" dehumanizes and animalizes Macbeth, suggesting he is savage, barbarous and brutish like a wild predator. Alternatively, it implies he was a **slave** to violence or to his master, the Devil. Indeed, Macbeth is demonized as he loses his noble titles and is universally hated, a stark contrast with his reputation at the beginning of the play where he was idealized.

One of the most important pillars of the survival of the British monarchy is, with no doubt, the quasi - special conception that the English had of the notions of order, hierarchy, obedience, respect, and chaos. This model that had strongly prevailed throughout the 16<sup>th</sup> century remained vivid in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and survived even until today even if its impact has diminished along the way. The Elizabethan conceived of their society as an entity based entirely on an immutable hierarchy, which Macbeth dishonours.

The fear of the civil war, the disruption of the order and the return to the chaos that England knew before the advent of Tudors and at the time of the war of Roses dominate the British people's mind and help them keep to monarchy as a British institution that will never be questioned except in creative art like drama.

In *Macbeth* Duncan has been a good and virtuous king who has borne his faculties well. He has been a legitimate ruler who received the hearty obedience and trust of all. But Macbeth is a usurper, an illegitimate ruler. He fails to rule with competence and faithfulness. He is called the tyrant, the murderer, the butcher, the evil incarnate, etc. He rules by engaging spies at all houses, by unleashing forces of distrust and disorder. The

whole environment of Scotland is vitiated. Every morning a mother loses her husband or a son becomes an orphan, the queen and her son Malcolm are respectively made widow and orphan by the murderous Macbeth.

Fortunately, Shakespeare will not let the chaos brought in the kingdom by Macbeth's desecration of kingship forever, restoration will soon take place through Shakespeare's empowerment of Macduff to bring back legitimacy in the kingdom. So, after the murder of Macbeth by Macduff a noble man in the kingdom, the kingship lineage is restored and Malcolm becomes the ideal king. He is a legitimate ruler and unlike his father Duncan, he is not blindly trusting and sentimental. He is found cautious; he tests the sincerity of faith in Macduff. Malcolm warns Macduff against Macbeth's hypocrisy: "This tyrant, whose sole name blisters our tongues, / Was once thought honest: you have lov'd him well; / He hath not touched you yet." (Act IV, Scene iii, lines 12-14) This denotes of a possible change of character which Malcolm warns Macduff against.

By assuming the rule of Scotland, Malcolm bestows on the nobles the titles of earls, calls back the exiled friends, condemns the cruel ministers of the dead butcher and decides to do the needful in proper degree and in proper time. He seeks the grace of God. Thus, he resolves upon setting the unsettled order and reestablishing the forces of re-construction.

Indeed, Shakespeare believes in divine kingship or ideal notion of kingship. A King is 'the Lord's anointed temple'. The murder of the King is a sacrilegious act, a desecration of holy royal power. Heaven is troubled with man's foul deed on a king. The symbol of darkness at the death of Duncan connotes the crucifixion of Christ the Messiah, the coming King, when from the sixth to the ninth hour the sun was eclipsed and the earth was covered with darkness. It is as if Duncan has been crucified by Macbeth. By referring to this imagery, Macbeth stands for the evil power, whereas Duncan stands for sacral power. When in Act II, scene 3, lines 65-69, Macduff saw Duncan lying murdered, he shouts: O horror! horror! horror! Tongue, nor heart, / Cannot conceive nor name thee! /.../ Most sacrilegious murder has broke ope / The Lord's anointed temple, and stole thence / The life o' the building." Shakespeare asserts clearly that the murder of the King is an unholy act, a deed of disorder which brings chaos and destruction over the society and nature. Admittedly, Shakespeare in the play *Macbeth*, dramatizes the king-killing

in all its moral, political, physical and metaphysical implications. This dramatic metaphor results from the ideology of sacrality of British kingship.

## Conclusion

The objective of this work was to highlight the sacrality of the British kingship reflected in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and show the consequences the breach of this royal sacred power can have on the society. As a result, the semiotic approach to the play found that British monarchy is sacred and contributes inevitably to the preservation of peace and harmony within the British society. Therefore, the study has shown that the preservation of this kingship power based on British norms and traditions, is quite rewarding in terms of the safeguard of popular liberty, national unity and the country's stability. The syntactic, semantic and pragmatic study of the play has also shown that Shakespeare as a playwright draws the attention of the British audience and other people across the world to the sacrality of British royal power, the desecration of which can bring chaos and disharmony instead of peace and stability. Thus, the audience of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* can understand through the semiotic perspectives that killing, dethroning illegally a British king can surely attract divine wrath and brings about instability and chaos in the society instead of order and civilization.

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