
Macbeth's Free Will

It has been believed that the choices we make only elude fate and fate is only a manipulator that helps choose your path. In Shakespeare's tragic play, *Macbeth* (1609), the main character falls from being a nobleman by the drive of his free will to act upon the fateful words of the witches'; Macbeth in no cause is under a spell, it was his own decisions which unknowingly leads him to his downfall. Macbeth could have let fate happen on its own, but instead, he decides to test fate by taking actions that lead to serious consequences for himself and others in the play.

Macbeth, the future king, meets with the three witches. The witches say a prophecy stating he will be the 'king of the future'. "All hail, Macbeth, thou shalt be king hereafter!" (I, iii, 50-55). This was the time when the witches had hailed Macbeth, hinting him of his deepest desire, you see the witches did not tell him how to get it, it was his free will to take action upon it. Firstly, when Macbeth says, "So foul and fair a day I have not seen" (I, iii, 38), meaning how it's foul that the witches are arising a storm, but fair because he gained victory on the battlefield. His words are a paradox and they echo the witch's words in the starting, "Fair is foul, and foul is fair" (I, i, 12). These lines are similar and have interrelated ideas, representing the unity between Macbeth and the forces of darkness. Macbeth's first words in the play can be taken as; things that seem fair, like becoming king, can be foul, and which leads him to his downfall. Secondly, is how Lady Macbeth having a huge influence on Macbeth's decisions and choices he had made throughout the play. When Lady Macbeth got the letter stating he is "Thane of Cawdor", she says to herself, "Which fate and metaphysical aid doth seem to have the crown withal" (I, v, 29-30), stating how fate doesn't make things happen, our actions can make Macbeth king. But she thinks to herself Macbeth is "too full o'th' milk of human kindness" (I, v, 16) using the metaphor "milk", to resemble he's too kind and lacks cruelty to become a king. Finally, she takes action to guide Macbeth to strive for the crown by "pour[ing] [her] spirits in thine ear and chastise with the valor of [her] tongue" (I, v, 25-26), thus describing her plan to convince Macbeth for the crown. Therefore, the witches have not only put Macbeth on tenterhooks but as well as Lady Macbeth, which in return makes her the biggest influence in his downfall.

Despite having external influences to convince him for becoming king, the strongest argument for his free will is his ambition to be king himself, but he has 3 major obstacles that challenge his thoughts and actions to overcome them. Firstly, is how Macbeth believes that "if chance will have me, king, why, chance may crown me without my stir", showing how in the starting he trusted his gut to believe in fate, but the turning point was when Duncan announced, "Our eldest, Malcolm, whom we name hereafter the Prince of Cumberland"(I, iv, 39-40), this is the first sign of jealousy that arises leading him to plan his initial step to his downfall by saying "[Don't let] The eye wink at the hand, yet let that be Which the eye fears, when it is done, to see" (I, iv, 54-55). His ambition was put into action by Lady Macbeth offending his manliness by accusing Macbeth of being "green and pale" (I, vii, 38), she mentions green in terms of "sickness", making Macbeth feel small and weak. This lead by Lady Macbeth makes Macbeth murder Duncan, turning him into a tyrant. Secondly, is how he still isn't at peace from one murder, because he knows Banquo got granted a prophecy saying, "Thou shalt get kings, though thou be none"(I, iii, 68-69), indicating he still has to overcome Banquo and Fleance, who

is a threat to his future. Macbeth has become more independent and tells his wife to “be innocent of the knowledge” (III, ii, 47), signifying how he is going to carry out this murder on his own without the support of Lady Macbeth. He says how she can “applaud the deed” (III, ii, 48) after it is accomplished. This resembles how he has become a “bloody tyrant” due to his ambitious nature of achieving what he wants with his free will. Finally, is how Macbeth was warned by the witches to “Beware [of] Macduff. Beware of the thane of Fife” (IV, i, 71) when he went the second time to meet them. This is the last threat to eliminate according to the witch’s prophecies, and due to that he does not care how many kills he has done, but this last kill is still required to live threat-free. Macbeth openly challenges fate by trying to kill Macduff but kills his whole family instead. This shows us Macbeth believes he is invincible and has become overconfident. At the end of the play, Macbeth’s ambition had driven him so insane, that he had “almost forgot the taste of fears” (V, v, 9) due to the number of supernatural things he had committed.

It must not be forgotten that Macbeth, a person whose ambition, his life's leading force, is his greatest weakness which causes him to fall from a successful position to death eventually. He had allowed power to destroy himself, making him appear very gullible. Just how when Macbeth said, “My thought, whose murder yet is but fantastical”, resembling his pitiable feelings towards his driven ambition that turned him into an atrocious human being he is now. This Shakespearean play shows the downfalls of being easily influenced or manipulated by someone or something.