READİNG WİLLİAM SHAKESPEARE'S MACBETH AS A POLİTİCAL TEXT
SİYASİ BİR METİN OLARAK WİLLİAM SHAKESPEARE'İN MACBETH'İNİ OKUMA

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims at analysing William Shakespeare's Macbeth as a political text within the framework of cultural materialism. It will explore Shakespeare's political motivation for legitimation of authority and challenges to it in society. In Macbeth, Shakespeare reflected political issues of James I's reign, his concerns with the culture of monarchy and also the operations of the power. Shakespeare inscribed his theories of kingship that glorified divine identities and rights of the kings on cultural memory, on the other hand, he wrote about the contradictions to it. He employed the political aspects of witchcraft; witches' prophecies motivated the destruction of the political order. This paper searches the scope of control and dissidence in relation to prophecies of the witches in macbeth. From Cultural materialist perspective, this paper explores the historical context of Shakespeare's text beyond the particular political and ideological perception that trusted traditional order, culture of monarchy, and divinity of kings. It focuses on the development of culture in Macbeth through dominant, residual and emergent perspectives. It does not explicitly concern with the operations of power that is exercised by powerful ones on weaker ones, instead, it explores the competing forces the dominant culture. It presents that despite the fact that the dominant culture desires to keep control in hand; it produces many dissident subjects that question, demystify and subvert it.

Key Words: Cultural Materialism, Dissident, Political History, Witches, Prophesy

ÖZ

Bu yazı William Shakespeare'in Macbeth'ini kültürel materyalizm çerçevesinde politik bir metin olarak incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Shakespeare'in, otoritenin meşrulaştırılması ve toplumdaki otoriteye karşı gelinmesi için siyasi motivasyonunu keşfedecektir. Macbeth'te Shakespeare, 1. James'in hükümdarlığının politik meselelerini, monarşi kültürü ve aynı zamanda gücün kullanılması ile ilgili endişelerini yansıttı. Shakespeare, kralın, kralların ilahi kimliklerini ve haklarını yücelten teorisini kültürel hafızaya kazırken, diğer yandan da ona karşı itirazlar hakkında yazdı. Büyücülüğün politik yönlerini kullandı; cadıların kehanetleri, siyasi düzenin yıkılmasını motive etti. Bu yazı Macbeth'teki cadıların kehanetlerine bağlı olarak hâkimiyet ve muhalif kapsamlarını araştırmaktadır. Kültürel materyalist bakış açısına göre, bu yazı Shakespeare'in metninin tarihsel bağlamını, geleneksel düzene, monarşi kültürüne ve kralların tanrılığına güvenen politik ve ideolojik algıların ötesinde incelemektedir. Macbeth'te, dominant, residual ve emergent bakış açıları sayesinde kültürün gelişimine odaklanır. Güçlü olanların zayıf olanlara uyguladığı gücün işleyişiyle açıkça ilgilenmek yerine, dominant kültür içinde rekabet eden güçleri araştırıyor. Dominant kültürün kontrolü elinde tutmak istemesine rağmen; onu sorgulayan, gizeminden arındıran ve düzenini bozan pek çok muhalif ürettiğini ortaya koymaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kültürel Materyalizm, Muhalif, Siyasi Tarih, Cadılar, Kehanet

This paper is a reading of William Shakespeare's tragedy *Macbeth* as a political text from the perspective of Cultural materialist criticism. It explores the political interest in Shakespeare. It presents how Shakespeare addressed a variety of political concerns that were planned to idealize the proprieties of kingship and demystify the operations of certain forms of power in his literary work *Macbeth*. Shakespeare wrote *Macbeth* after the accession of James I so he reflected some pieces of the dominant Jacobean culture and its political conditions during the reign of King James I. King James I's interest in divine rights of the kings was involved in *Macbeth*. It became one of the literary texts in which power presented itself through the ideology. However, cultural materialist reading of it renews its dominant reading that sustains an ideal image of kingship within the world of the play by covering up the possibilities of the resistance to the dominant ideology. It covers how *Macbeth* comprises within itself the alternative stories, issues, and ideas that the traditional reading of it tries to ignore, exclude and uncover. It denotes that the conflict between the subordination to the dominant social order and the subversion of it dominates *Macbeth*.

Cultural materialism is described to "establish[] itself primarily as a politicized form of historiography… It addresses the past in order to re-read culture in the context of its true time" (Holderness xv-xvi). It means studying historical materials that can be the canonical English literary texts, especially Shakespeare's works, in a politicized form. While studying a literary text, instead of giving privilege to the literary text and making a division between the text and its historical context, Cultural materialist critics rely on the historical context as an essential framework. They study a text as a product of a particular history that can be fully understood in terms of it. They deal with the historical context and the political dealings that have been ignored or repressed in some works of literary criticism. Andrew Milner defines the significance of contextual factors in a literary text, he states that textual meaning always depends on the context that produces and reproduces them.

> The term 'textualized meaning' denotes a concern with signifying practices in general rather than literature or art or the mass media in particular. Finally, 'production, distribution, exchange and reception' are intended to denote an interest in how texts are produced and received, how they are productive, and with the practices that articulate them and that they articulate, as well as with texts 'in their own right'. Such concerns are necessarily political, of course, since all texts are always produced and received in contexts significantly affected by the structures of social power. (Milner 5)

A text is a part of the socio-cultural process, in other words; it is a material or a product of a culture which includes the economic and political systems, social behaviour, customs, values, attitudes, rules, laws, and constitutions. The dominant ideology, which is formed by the powerful and elite class to control society, denotes all these elements and influences people's behaviours and perception of the things around them. People think that all these elements and beliefs instilled in them consciously or unconsciously are natural and therefore true and universally valid, on account of this, the dominant ideology helps the powerful and elite classes maintain their social, economic and political interests. The dominant ideology that has been transmitted through historically specific elements and institutions determines a text's meaning and shapes people's perception. Cultural materialist critics study a literary text as a linguistic entity and as an ideological force.

Cultural materialist critics Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield state the significance of historical context in cultural materialist criticism.

> Historical context undermines the transcendent significance traditionally accorded to the literary text and allows us to recover its histories; theoretical method detaches the text from immanent criticism which seeks only to reproduce it in its own terms; socialist and feminist commitment confronts the conservative categories in which most criticism has hitherto been conducted; textual analysis locates the critique of traditional approaches where it cannot be ignored. We call this 'cultural materialism.' (Dollimore and Sinfield vii)

Cultural materialist critics reread the historical context of a literary text to revive an understanding of a specific time in history and to rebuild its images beyond its traditional reading. While engaging with the contextualization of a literary text, they subvert the traditional perception which "select[s] supporting", dominant and hegemonic, "and exclude[s] 'marginal' or 'incidental' or 'secondary' evidence" (Williams 353). They refuse "the monological approach of past historical scholarship," one "concerned with discovering a single political vision, usually identical to that said to be held by the entire literate class or indeed the entire population" (Dollimore and Sinfield 4-5). They have analysed the possibility of the

opposition and resistance to the dominant ideology rather than explicitly exploring the dominant ideology and the operations of power in a literary text. They argue the possibility of alternative ways of viewing, reading, and interpreting of a literary text by including the dissident politics, feminist deconstructions, etc... They focus on the agencies and voices of the marginalized and exploited groups such as dissidents, women, black, etc… in the literary texts.

Cultural materialist critics underline that the possibility of the alternative or oppositional forms of culture in the practice of politics related to historical dynamism. They argue that history is the dynamic movement of the powers, culture occurs as a result of the struggle of the dominant discourse and a variety of alternative, opposing and different discourses. They claim that these alternative, opposing and different discourses that have already been incorporated into the dominant culture can emerge to overcome and replace it. These discourses can help individuals challenge and disengage from power. They figure out the internal dynamic relations of the dominant, residual and emergent elements in culture to define any actual process of cultural formation. By doing this, Cultural materialist critics have addressed the impossibility of the stability of any culture.

One of the founders of Cultural materialism, Raymond Williams engages with the issue of production and reproduction of socio-cultural relations. He defines the shape of the culture as a dynamic, constantly changing and living entity; and he argues that all cultures occur as the result of the struggle of three elements: dominant, residual and emergent. There are always tensions among these three ideologies, discourses, and perspectives. All of them are parts of a culture; they depend on one another and their interrelations influence and define the development of a culture. "It is necessary to examine how these relate to the whole cultural process rather than only to the selected and abstracted dominant system" (Williams 353). Williams indicates that the dominant ideology, which is accepted by the majority of the group or the society, especially by its primary dynamic force, its ruling, powerful, dominant and privileged class, is the most influential and powerful. He writes, "[I]n what I have called epochal" analysis, a cultural process is seized as a cultural system, with determinate dominant features: feudal culture or bourgeois culture or a transition from one to another. This emphasis on dominant and definitive lineaments and features is important and often, in practice, effective" (Williams 353). Williams indicates that each dominant culture, in reality, does not exclude or include all human practices, ideologies, discourses or perspectives etc... There are older-residual and newer-emergent perspectives in a dominant culture. In addition to defining the features of the dominant; residual and emergent elements in culture, operate in complex and dynamic ways, prove the possibility of going against the dominant or outside of its borders.

During the transformation or evolution of a culture, Williams states sometimes, the older or past elements, practices, ideologies or perspectives, known as residual, can appear as alternatives to the current dominant ideology. Residual was previously dominant, it "has been effectively formed in the past, but it is still active in the cultural process, not only and often not at all as an element of the past, but as an effective element of the present" (Williams 353-54). It becomes possible for residual, derived from an earlier stage of a culture, to be part of the dominant culture; it can be included in it again through reinterpretation of its aspects that have previously been incorporated into the dominant ideology. Dominant ideology tries to ignore or marginalize Emergent element because it introduces and encourages completely new, different, oppositional, controversial and developing ideas, values, concepts, practices, social formations and political and religious beliefs which challenge and threaten the dominant. Emergent element develops out of a new set of interactions and in course of time, it becomes less marginal. To sum up, Williams indicates that the interactions of these elements cause continuous changes in the patterns of culture. Despite the fact that culture tries to maintain its stability; it adopts new, alternative and shifting values, views, perspectives, ideologies, and practices. In *Macbeth*, Shakespeare reflected the struggle of the dominant, residual and emergent values, expressions and perspectives in the Jacobean culture; he presented the dominant ideology which appreciated the divinity of the monarch; residual which tried to restore the idea that monarchy was divine and royal when it was for the welfare of the society; emergent which questioned the divinity of the tyrannical monarchy that served on the interest of the King Macbeth.

Cultural materialist critics' reliance on the historical context has affected the reading, studying and interpreting the ideas in Shakespeare's works. They study how Shakespeare's literary works were indirectly involved in history, "Cultural materialism, therefore, studies the implications of literary texts in history" (Dollimore and Sinfield viii). They discuss the interaction of culture with social and political elements during Shakespeare's life. It can be said that the main concern in their revisiting Shakespeare's texts is to explore its historical context beyond particular ideological perception and politics that trust the essentialist

humanist conceptions of identity, Christian concept of morality and traditional order in Jacobean culture. In *Political Shakespeare*, Dollimore and Sinfield reinterpret Shakespeare's tragedies beyond the traditional perception of character, "permanent, universal and essentially unchanging human nature" (98) and individuality found in Shakespearean studies and Renaissance literature. They challenge the theory of human nature that ""things are as they are" because of man's basic attributes and nothing could ever be different" (Dollimore and Sinfield 162). They criticize the idealist assumptions that indicate Shakespeare spoke universal truths and revealed universal human values and qualities. To some degree, they challenge the dominant perspectives attributed to Shakespeare's texts that are seen as direct sources of absolute values, qualities, and wisdom. They engage in analysing the alternative or resistant readings of his texts along with the dominant readings. In the introduction to *Political Shakespeare*, Jonathan Dollimore wrote that "it would be wrong to represent idealist criticism as confidently dominant in Shakespeare studies" (4). They state that human nature is an ideological construct produced by history and changes accordingly to history so it cannot always be the same. As a result of critiques of essentialist humanist conceptions of identity in his works, they draw attention to the new, alternative or opposing views, to the issue of subjectivity, marginality, and gender. The individuals, the marginalized, silenced, dissidents and "the other" are restored to history.

Cultural materialist critics explore how Shakespeare was under the influence and inspirations of his contemporary events, how the traces of those events were reflected in his works. "A play by Shakespeare is related to the contexts of its production-to the economic and political system of Elizabethan and Jacobean England and to the particular institutions of cultural production (the court, patronage, theater, education and the church)" (Dollimore and Sinfield viii). The study of his play *Macbeth* from the perspective of cultural materialism requires the exploration of the issues related to the historical context that includes the accession of James I, the idea of kingship, sovereignty, the power struggles, the political complexities, tyranny, the Gunpowder Plot, and the witchcraft.

Macbeth can be best understood within its socio-political and historical context. It can be said that *Macbeth* is a material product of the Jacobean period in which Shakespeare contributed to the portrayal of the Jacobean worldview. It was a political work that was very closely related to its historical context; it was written in 1606 shortly after the accession of King James I to the throne of England. When Shakespeare wrote *Macbeth,* the monarchy was the dominant form of government and the divine identity of the king was the dominant ideology. It was interwoven with the political, religious and socio-economic conditions of the King James I's reign. At Shakespeare's time, theatre functioned as a tool to shape the perceptions of the culture through the plays it staged. "Sermons were not only prime entertainments, attracting far larger audiences than plays, but they were like plays— and not always so indirectly— instruments of state" (qtd. in Shamas 19). *Macbeth* was shaped by royal patronage so it functioned as a political instrument of the state that reflected the practices of the monarch and the theories of kingship. While maintaining his artistic genius, Shakespeare tried to win King James I's approval by glorifying, idealizing, and legitimating King James I's political theories that were based on the divine identity and rights of the king.

Shakespeare illustrated the real events, characters and the issues of the eleventh century in his play. *Macbeth* is based on the historical accounts of King Macbeth of Scotland which were recorded by Scottish philosopher Hector Boece and Raphael Holinshed in his Chronicles of Englande, Scotlande, and Ireland. Shakespeare created a parallel between his literary work and the historical reality, as a playwright, his common task was "[t]o represent and illustrate the past, the actions of men" (James 167) as an artistic genius, not as a historian. Shakespeare made some changes in the historical accounts to confirm its political agreeableness in addition to strengthening its artistic value. For example, according to these chronicles, James I was descended from Banquo, through his son, Fleance. Shakespeare added prophesy to show that Banquo's descendant would be king, in this way, he flattered King James I by the king connecting his ancestry to its right place. Moreover, he omitted King Macbeth's just rule longed ten years in the chronicles. He wrote and performed *Macbeth* to teach subjects obedience to their king by showing them the results of disobedience. Cultural materialist reading of *Macbeth* analyses its role in the circulation of power.

Cultural materialist perspective reads Shakespeare's literary text with reference to the dominant discourse of his time in order to clarify its political dimension. King James I's political theory, which was based on the idea of the divinity of the kings, provided political and religious authority to King James I. He wrote a treatise on the right of kings and in one of his speeches in parliament, he set out the doctrine of divine rights of the king. He stated that

> [t]he state of monarchy is the supremest thing upon 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…Kings are justly called gods, for that they exercise a manner or resemblance of divine power upon earth. For if you will consider the attributes to God, you shall see how they agree in the person of a king. (James I 137)

King James I tried to justify god-centred arguments in politics and shape the dominant culture through his narrative. His narrative reflected the ideological mystification of kingship which meant that kings' authority to rule was presented to them directly by the will of God, kings were the earthly representative of God's will so their right to absolute power could not be challenged, scolded and questioned by anyone except God. Any intention to criticize, judge or restrict their discourses and authorities was against the will of God. In order to secure his political authority, he explained his beliefs about being divine. In *Macbeth*, King Duncan was portrayed as godly, as the supreme figure upon earth.

King James I's political theory of kingship was part of the divine natural order that had been set by God. It was "a system of duties and mutual obligations" (Wells 162) that had to exist between the kings and their subjects as they were united by it. Shakespeare fictionalized this conservative idea about the order of society at that time; he created a harmony in the society that the subjects displayed service, loyalty, honour, duty, and love to their king. Macbeth said, "[t]he service and loyalty I owe" (Shakespeare 1.4.22) to King Duncan. He was portrayed as a royal gardener who kept the natural order, as kings have power to "make and unmake their subjects: they have the power of raising, and casting down, of life and of death, judges over all their subjects" (James I 137). When he welcomed Macbeth, he said that "I have begun to plant thee, and will labour / To make thee full of growing" (Shakespeare 1.4.28-29). King Duncan was portrayed as a wise king and also as a benevolent father of his subjects. One of the Scottish noble, Ross referred King Duncan as the father, he said "[f]arewell, father" (Shakespeare 2.4.39). Shakespeare fictionalized King James I beliefs that kings had authority over their subjects like fathers have over their children. "As for the father of a family, they had of old under the law of nature, *patriam potestatem* [fatherly power], which was *potestatem vitea et necis* [power of life and death] over their children or family" (James I 137). Kings' fatherly power of life over their children or family was fictionalized; King Duncan sent his army to defeat two invading troops from Irelands and Norway; in addition to punishing the revolt against his divine power, he aimed to protect the order in the society and to protect his subjects, children or family, from the attacks of the enemies.

Shakespeare presented political motivation for obedience to the ruling, he composed *Macbeth* as a political allusion in which a chaotic world without a just king was dramatized. "Like James's works, Macbeth is constructed around the fear of a world without sovereignty" (Stallybrass 192). At the night of Macbeth's murder of King Duncan, there occurred unnatural things as signs of the danger of regicide, "regicide provokes what appear to be unmistakable signs of divine anger" (Wells 146). Macbeth described the gashes where the dagger cut King Duncan as "his gash'd stabs look'd like a breach in nature" (Shakespeare 2.3.120), gashes looked like wounds to nature and violence against the king's body caused unnatural events and foreshadowed Macbeth's tyrannical rule's destruction of the natural order in the society. Shakespeare used the weather to create a gloomy atmosphere for the future; the disturbances in the natural world foreshadowed the approaching social disorder. The natural world responded to human beings' evil actions. The old man who represented common people and Ross witnessed the wild weather and animal behaviour at the night of the king's murder, they commented on this fact.

> OLD MAN. Threescore and ten I can remember well;
>
>   Within the volume of which time I have seen
>
>   Hours dreadful and things strange, but this sore night
>
>   Hath trifled former knowings.
>
> ROSS. Ah! good father;
>
>   Thou seest the heavens, as troubled with man's act,
>
>   Threatens his bloody stage: By the 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?

OLD MAN. 'Tis unnatural,

Even like the deed that's done. On Tuesday last

A falcon, towering in her pride of place,

Was by a mousing owl hawk'd at and kill'd.

ROSS. And Duncan's horses, — a thing most strange and certain,—

Beauteous and swift, the minions of their race,

Turned wild in nature, broke their stalls, flung out,

Contending 'gainst obedience, as they would

Make war with mankind. (Shakespeare 2.4.1-18)

Day's transformation to night, animals' being denatured showed the approaching tragic situation of the country where tyrants became monarch. The sun that metaphorically represented the king's power was covered by the darkness of the storms that metaphorically represented Macbeth's evilness. During his reign, Macbeth was tired of the order and wished for chaos and launched rage, he said, "I 'gin to be weary of the sun, / And wish the estate o' the world were now undone. / Ring the alarum–bell! Blow wind! Come, wrack (Shakespeare 5.5.49-51)!

Macbeth and Lady Macbeth questioned the divine identity of the king and projected plans to reject and intrude the authority of the divine being. Macbeth was aware that killing a divine being would destroy the order so he struggled to change his mind. He intended to delay their project to assassinate King Duncan. He expressed his hesitations to Lady Macbeth that "[w]e will proceed no further in this business: / He hath honour'd me of late; and I have bought/ Golden opinions from all sorts of people, / which would be worn now in their newest gloss, / Not cast aside so soon (Shakespeare 1.7.31-35). However; Macbeth and Lady Macbeth metaphorically transformed King Duncan's garden to a grave. As a result of regicide, they were dramatically punished by a physiological disorder, sleeplessness, restlessness, and death, "[s]leep no more! /Macbeth does murder sleep" (Shakespeare 2.2.36-37). Shakespeare dramatized their punishment for their crimes against the divine being, for rebelling against God. *Macbeth* functioned as a cautionary tale that an awful fate inevitably overtook any other potential mutineers. Shakespeare dramatized the absence of an absolute moral value and the subversion of the tyrannical ruler, Macbeth; there was the restoration of order, peace, and justice by Malcolm who got his rightful crown. Malcolm brought back the just rule; he said "[w]hat's more to do, / Which would be planted newly with the time" (Shakespeare 5.7.93-94). He transformed the country that was violated by Macbeth to an ordered garden again.

Cultural materialist criticism has affected the political perception of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. It places *Macbeth* not only within the historical discourses of monarchism and but also within the resistance, dissident or challenge theory. Theatre at Shakespeare's time, known as a place for social meetings, was a political institution that supported the dominant cultural order; on the other hand, it was a political institution that the reigning ideologies were questioned. "[P]lays were written and performed to teach 'subjects obedience to their king' by showing them 'the untimely end of such as have moved tumults, commotions and insurrections'. The other view claimed virtually the opposite, stressing the theatre's power to demystify authority and even to subvert it" (Dollimore and Sinfield 8). Besides reflecting existing political discourse, *Macbeth* concerned with the political intervention. Jonathan Dollimore states that the political perspective,

[…] applies especially to tragedy, that genre traditionally thought to be most capable of transcending the historical moment of inception and of representing universal truths. Contemporary formulations of the tragic certainly made reference to universals but they were also resolutely political, especially those which defined it as a representation of tyranny. Such accounts, and of course the plays themselves, were appropriated as both defences and challenges to authority. (Dollimore and Sinfield 9)

Dollimore argues that tragedies are seen as circulating the dominant political discourses; on the other hand, they promote political motivation against the dominant political discourses. The use of tyranny in tragedies

is related to the issue of the challenge to political authority. The figure of the tyrant was shaped according to society's political imagination. Tyranny has a crucial function in Shakespeare's tragedies; his use of tyranny in his tragedies provides a sense of political intervention. He took the socio-political context in consideration for his creation of tyrant figure. Tyrant figure, Macbeth embodies the ideological strain of the exercise of power.

Cultural materialist reading of *Macbeth* demonstrates how a literary text can function as an instrument of a dominant cultural order, and how the consistency of that order is threatened by inner tensions, contradictions, challenges, dissidents, differences, and tyrants that it tries to ignore, exclude or hide. According to Sinfield, traditional literary criticism has adapted itself to the ideological machinery that is responsible for the marginalization, ignorance, and exclusion of "the other" and it has concealed the existence of ideological faultlines in literary texts. He states that dissidents can be found in literary texts as literary texts are regarded as a vehicle of political and ideological dissidence. He identifies this as "literary dissidence." "Literary dissidence" is produced by those who suffer from political oppression, religious and social exclusion and gender and racial discrimination. It challenges to traditional perception of the relation between literature and politics, it observes political stakes, it is traditionally gendered.

> Literary dissidence accepts-in the main very gingerly- a touch of the feminine. Its invocation of a "human" a protest depends on a strategic deployment of effeminacy; of culture against brutality, the spirit against the system, style against the purpose, personal emotion against compulsion. Hence the commonplace that the great writer is androgynous. There mustn't be too much of the 'wrong' sex, though. The trick in artistic dissidence is to appropriate sufficient of the radical aura of androgyny, without more than is necessary of the disabling stigma. The great writer embraces something of the feminine, it is often said-but not too much." (Sinfield, *Cultural Politics* 32)

In the analysis of a literary text, the main issue for Cultural materialist critics is the possibility of subversion and dissidence. Macbeth can be seen as an example of literary dissidence, it is a political play of and about King James I's time. It brings dissidents to the fore. *Macbeth* has political dimensions to reflect the alternative oppositional perspectives to the operations of power and mystification of the identity of the king by the dominant culture.

Cultural materialist criticism engages with the beliefs and attitudes that are unexamined in *Macbeth.* It emphasizes the ways how *Macbeth* was fictionalized to present the criticisms to traditional ideas about politics; "what is political in a more narrow, traditional sense: the ordering and enforcing, the gaining and losing, of public power in the state" (Leggatt vii). Shakespeare was not a neutral observer of the political and cultural issues of his age, he externalized that despite its being dominant; people could not feel obliged to accept the divine identity of the monarch. Although Shakespeare wrote *Macbeth* to flatter King James I when he was on English throne, he reflected the appearing instability in the existing social order that questioned the acceptability of the King James I's ideology. "For Sinfield, 'the insistence in representations upon unity in a simple hierarchy does not mean that is how the state *actually worked*, only that this is the way major parts of the ruling fraction represented it as working'" (Parvini 124). The conflict between the ideology and the reality of Jameson reign dominates *Macbeth*. Shakespeare mirrored that absolute monarchy was not succeeded in an ideal way, as there were subjects who opposed James I's ideologies and projected plans to reject the authority of Stuart monarch in England. The dissidents in the society that rejected the authority of James I were illustrated through the dissident characters; witches, Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, Macduff, Banquo, Malcolm, Donalbain, Lennox, and Ross. Shakespeare's engagement with the issue of representation of dissidents in society and literary work makes *Macbeth* important. Through dissidents; the reigning values of Shakespeare's time are evaluated. Shakespeare exposed to the new opposing idea; the overthrow of the rightfully enthroned king if necessary. His reflection of the struggle for power is extended to include the demystification of the identity of the king.

Cultural materialist critics engage with the subversion, dissidence, and resistance that emerge along with the dominant culture in literary texts. They deal with the possible political change, as they believe culture is not a static phenomenon, it is a site of the dynamic interaction of dominant, residual and emergent elements so it is always changing. Change is inescapable parts of the authorities that are built upon neglects, repress and oppose. Sinfield wrote, "Williams argued the co-occurrence of subordinate, residual, emergent, alternative, and oppositional cultural forces alongside the dominant, in varying relations of incorporation, negotiation, and resistance"(Sinfield *Faultlines* 9). In a literary text, they study these dissidents. The neglected, repressed and oppressed ones appeared as dissidents, function secretly to overthrow dominant culture, a ruling authority and political system. Shakespeare portrayed the circulation

of dominant, residual and emergent elements that existed in Jacobean culture and the possibility of change within the context of Gunpowder Plot of 1605. Dissidence that operated with reference to dominant culture was incorporated in *Macbeth*.

Macbeth's political dimension can be understood in the context of the unsuccessful Gunpowder Plot of 1605. As a result of James I's refusal to implement more religious tolerance to English Roman Catholics, the annoyed Catholics devised Gunpowder Plot to dethrone King James I. After the failure of Gunpowder Plot, a policy of harsh regimentation was instituted in England. The dissidents were ghastly tortured until they confessed their plot. They were executed in a horrible way as a caution to the others who questioned King James I's absolute right to rule. Despite its being a failed assassination attempt to King James I, the first of the Stuart kings of England, Stuart monarch lost its power and influence in the 1630s. Shakespeare's estimated the inescapability of the change of culture that was built upon repression and intolerance. The play carries apocalyptic messages for Jacobean society.

Cultural materialist criticism of *Macbeth* undermines European humanist assumptions in which dualism, binary oppositions, and oppression of "the other" functions. "Cultural materialism seeks to discern the scope for dissident politics of class, race, gender, and sexual orientation, both within texts and in their roles in culture" (Sinfield *Faultlines* 9-10). They expand their analysis of the dynamic forces of culture to include issues of class, gendered, religious, racial exclusion and discrimination. Dollimore and Sinfield insist that cultural materialism has a distinctive politics, that "it registers its commitment to the transformation of a social order which exploits people on grounds of race, gender and class" (Holderness viii). Subversion not only emerges within the dominant ideology for hegemony, but it also comes out from differences in the culture. Dollimore and Sinfield describe, "subversive knowledge emerges under pressure of contradictions in the dominant ideology which also fissure subjectivity; the subjects who embody, discover or convey this knowledge are often thereby stretched across social and psychic contradictions that literally destroy them" (141). Cultural materialist reading of *Macbeth* offers the subversive and dissident reading of *Macbeth* that questions the god-centred arguments in politics and allows the socially obscured, marginalized and excluded ones to be heard. It presents the process of how socially obscured, marginalized and excluded people became participants in political culture. This proves that the dominant culture is always under the pressure of alternative views and beliefs.

The marginal status of women and their subversion of patriarchal order and taking place in the political world were reflected by Shakespeare in the tragedy through the depictions of witches and Lady Macbeth. They functioned as dissident figures in *Macbeth* who introduced the freedom of thought, rebellion, and political radicalism. Despite the expectations of their obedience to the patriarchal culture, they were free from the role of obedient women. They made their autonomous and dissident choices and became an agent of political history. Cultural materialist analysis of them presents them as emergent elements who functioned as rebel and tempters and offered alternative and opposite to dominant culture; the divinity of kingship or the godly rules.

Shakespeare blended his work with one of the dominant cultural materials of Jacobean culture, witchcraft. During the reign of King James I, the power of witchcraft practices increased. King was fascinated by their actual magical powers, at the same time; he showed his hatred and opposition to the witches. When he was James VI of Scotland, he suspected that a group of witches at North Berwick intended on his ruin and overthrow of the Scottish throne. During his reign, many victims, mostly women, who were healers, midwives were put in trials, and despicable forms of torture were used to make the victims confess, he took an active part in these trials, their confessions indicated the approaching conspiracy projected against the king. When he became King of England, his fascination with the dark arts continued. James I maintained a belief in witchcraft and witches' ability to make prophecies. However, in his *Demonology,* he formally denounced the act of prophecy and wizardry. "James may have chosen to insert and explore popular notions of witchcraft and Satan and use them to qualify his opinions and support his status as Divine Monarch" (Vazquez). King was politically against the witches, as he needed a satanic threat to his kingdom in order to justify his divine rights. During his reign, witchcraft functioned as a way of developing an understanding of political order. "Demonism was, logically speaking, one of the presuppositions of the metaphysics of order on which James's political ideas ultimately rested" (qtd. in Stallybrass 192).

In *Macbeth*, Shakespeare revealed the connection between witchcraft and the political culture. He fictionalized the influence of prophecy on the political events in the Jacobean structure. Shakespeare changed three witches, descended from the mythological weird sisters, to the dark prophetic witches. He

did not reduce them to the village witches that were old women due to the influence of his patron, King James I. "Perhaps if it had not been for the King's *Deamonologie* they would never have been witches at all" (qtd, in Shamas 18). He fictionalized three witches as political dissidents, traitors, rebels whose prophesy challenged the authority. He engaged with the scope of control and dissidence in relation to witches' prophesies. Macbeth's uncontrollable actions began with his encounter with the magical spirits, bubbling cauldrons and weird sisters who made prophesies, provocations and temptations. They hailed him as "Thane of Glamis" (Shakespeare 1.3.48)! And "Thane of Cawdor" (Shakespeare 1.3.49)! The third witch said "[a]ll hail, Macbeth! That shalt be king hereafter" (Shakespeare 1.3.50). Their greetings and prophesies for the future promised that Macbeth would become king. Having a glorious future charmed the ambitious Macbeth. Shakespeare reflected the Christian faith in free will, Macbeth struggled with his free will, but he did not succeed in turning prophecies aside due to his hunger for the crown, for power. As a result, he acted unreasonably for an uncertain and unknown future. He was responsible for his uncontrollable actions.

Lady Macbeth was associated with the witches in many ways. They were similar because of their equivocality that was the norm of femininity. When Macbeth entered; Lady Macbeth hailed him by his titles. She practiced witchcraft by surrounding Macbeth with her "mortal thoughts" (Shakespeare 1.5.42) to fulfil the third prophecy of the weird sisters. To satisfy her desire of her husband's being enthroned, she projected the regicide and intruded the dominant ideology of the society. She told her husband to look like the innocent flower, but the serpent under it. This is seen in witches' equivocal statements such as "fair is foul and foul is fair." On the other hand, both of them were described from patriarchal ideological grain, they were stripped of their femininity in some ways. Witches and Lady Macbeth were portrayed as sexless and attributed manly behaviours accordingly to the socio-ideological situations of Shakespeare's time. Banquo who was disturbed by the presence of beards said to witches that "[y]ou should be women, / And yet your beards forbid me to interpret / That you are so" (Shakespeare 1.3.45-46). In order to prepare her to kill the king, Lady Macbeth invoked scheming spirits to unsex her, to give masculine qualities such as violence and cruelty. She desired to take on manly characteristics in order to be stripped of feminine weakness. She cries, [c]ome, you spirits/ That tend on mortal thoughts! unsex me here,/And fill me from the crown to the toe top full /Of direst cruelty (Shakespeare 1.5.41-44). From the traditional perspective, like Eve in the Eden, their equivocality, eloquence and evil thoughts deceived and fooled Macbeth and poisoned the society. However, "[t] he trend for female roles began moving away from the "idolatry of women/women as goddesses/women as devils" as had been practiced in the past, in favour of more complex depictions which reflected individualism" (Shamas 25). Lady Macbeth and the witches appeared as individuals who experienced the freedom of individual actions and thoughts. In the political sense, their individualism functioned as the source of social dissidence, rebel, anarchy, and dissolution. The first two scenes with the witches and scenes with Lady Macbeth present the concept of rebellion; rebellion is associated with witchcraft in the medieval era. "If kingship is legitimated by analogy to God's rule over the earth, and the father's rule over the family and the head's rule over the body, witchcraft establishes the opposite analogies, whereby the Devil attempts to rule over the earth, and the woman over the family, and the body over the head"(Stallybrass 192).

The first two scenes with the witches displayed that Macbeth committed bloody accounts to gain the crown, the next scene with them presented that Macbeth went on violent actions due to fear of losing the crown. His murder of Duncan did not remain as his first murder; he went on murdering the people who questioned his tyrannical authority to protect his place, to keep himself as the king. He was haunted by guilt, anxiety, and fear of losing his statue. He said, "[t]here is none but he / Whose being I do fear; and under him / My Genius is rebuk'd, as it is said / Mark Antony's was by Caesar" (Shakespeare 3.1.54-57). Witches prophesied that Banquo's children would succeed to the throne of Scotland in the future, they so Macbeth was humiliated by the dangers of Banquo's line of dynasty, he stated that "[u]pon my head they plac'd a fruitless crown, /And put a barren sceptre in my gripe, / Thence to be wrench'd with an unlineal hand, / No son of mine succeeding" (Shakespeare 3. 1. 61-64). He was aware that Banquo and Fleance were dangers to his crown. After killing Banquo and Macduff's family, he demanded witches' prophecy for the future, the first witch warned him to beware of "[t]he power of man, for none of woman born / Shall harm Macbeth" (Shakespeare 4.1.80-81). And "Macbeth shall never vanquish'd be until / Great Birnam wood to high Dunsinane hill / Shall come against him" (Shakespeare 4.1.92-94). Witches confirmed the tragic destiny of Macbeth.

Macbeth can be seen as a criticism of political ambition and a way of denouncing tyranny, Macbeth was a tyrannical ruler who maintained his kingship in power through violence and dictatorship. His

despotic authority became the order of his reign; this led his country into chaos and launched Scotland into a brutal civil war. In politics, power and violence have a close relationship. Violence has critical two roles in politics; destruction of power and insurance of the stability of power. Sinfield discusses these roles of violence ascribed to Macbeth; Macbeth was praised by King Duncan for his violence against the rebels such as Macdonwald. King Duncan called him "worthy gentleman" (Shakespeare 1.2.24)! The operation of violence was justified when it was in the service of the power to ensure its stability; to destroy the ones described as its barbaric "the other". However; he was considered as a damned murderer when he killed Duncan. According to Sinfield, the logical conclusion is that "[v]iolence is good…when it is in the service of the prevailing dispositions of power; when it disrupts them, it is evil" (Sinfield *Faultlines* 95). Macbeth used violence as a political activity to enforce his power interest, he tried to legitimize and justify the violence. Macbeth's bloodthirsty, disorder, horror, fear became the order until the peace was restored by Malcolm.

Shakespeare presented the rise of residual values, expression, and people who could not approve Macbeth's new dominant value. Macbeth's new order that based upon tyranny was prone to the dangers of the residual culture. Cultural materialists have indicated that new dominant culture could be challenged and replaced with its residual culture, which "formed in the past, but still active in the cultural process" (Williams 353). Macbeth's tyrannical rule put the unconditional, absolute authority of the king in suspicion. The dissident figures Macduff, Banquo, Malcolm, Lennox, Ross, Menteth, and other lords that were active within the power with limited authority questioned the divine identity of King Macbeth. They discussed that Macbeth was the creator of the bloody accounts. They regarded the old values so they projected conspiracy against Macbeth who undermined the divinity of the king. They represented the possibilities of the resistance against tranny. The stability of the ideology, power and socio-political order established by Macbeth proved to be impossible. Shakespeare presented a variety of possibilities that transformed socio-political order.

There were dissidents that opposed the ruling authority and caused political and historical changes. It is proved that to achieve an ideological unity idealized by the rulers was not always successful. One of the dissident figures is the son of King Duncan, Malcolm; he questioned the lawfulness of the despotic ruler's actions. King Duncan announced Malcolm as his legitimate heir and successor, so he was seen as an obstacle to his ambitions by Macbeth. "[T]he king's two sons [Malcolm and Donalbain], / Are stol'n away and fled, which puts upon them / Suspicion of the deed" (Shakespeare 2.4.25-27). They became victims of Macbeth's unlawful deeds; they had to flee to Scotland. Malcolm fled to England to seek allies and he found foreign help and raised a large army to come over Macbeth. "The son of Duncan, / From whom this tyrant holds the due of birth, / Lives in the English court; and is receiv'd / Of the most pious Edward with such grace, / That the malevolence of fortune nothing / Takes from his high respect (Shakespeare 3.6.24-29). King of England helped Malcolm to invade Scotland to take his rightful throne; this part was also taken from real political history. These residual elements they gain strength, again. The power went to the control of justice and order. Malcolm, the new king of Scotland promised to rule justly. Shakespeare implied that a just ruler who cared for the interests of his subjects more than his own was better than the tyrannical ruler who repressed and abused them. In a way, he reflected the criticism against the ruling Stuart monarch. Shakespeare warned that the tyrannical authority could not be revised with passive complicity, but it was eventually reacted with resistance. Shakespeare estimated the Stuart monarchy's losing power and influence in the 1630s when the dissidents tried to depose the king from his throne, even sent his family and parliament to death. The divinity of king, the dominant value of the society, was replaced with the justification of deposes of the king from the throne if it was required.

Cultural materialist reading renews the dominant reading of *Macbeth* that sustains an ideal image of kingship within the world of the play. Rather than the legitimization of the dominant social structure or the supposedly universal truth, it comprises alternative readings that the dominant culture tried to exclude. Despite the fact that *Macbeth* functioned as an instrument of a dominant cultural order, it also pointed out that order was threatened, disrupted by inner contradictions, inconsistency, objection and tensions that it sought to oppress, ignore and mask.

In addition, Cultural materialism uses literature of the past to address injustices in the present politicized framework. "Cultural materialism seeks actively and explicitly to use the literature of yesterday to change the world today. It is a brazenly engaged political stance, committed to activating the dissident potential of past texts in order to challenge the present conservative consensus inside the educational institutions where it is forged" (qtd. in Parvini 127). From Cultural materialist aspect, *Macbeth* is a material

object being consumed in the present to address injustices of our time. *Macbeth's* popular themes such as satirizing political ambition, denouncing tyrannies and representation of dissidents, gender inequalities are still studied by modern writers, critics, researchers and academics to examine the injustices of their time and to shape their own political time. They went beyond the idea that a literary text only should be studied in its historical context.

> [C]ultural materialists are faced head-on with the problems history might throw up in our own culture. In fact, this judgment on us from the past is the *aim* of cultural materialism. Thus when Catherine Belsey talks about finding a place for women in Renaissance drama it is with a view to 'changing the present' concluding that 'the pressure to do so is increasingly urgent'. Belsey's critique of the seventeenth century's 'discourse of patriarchalism' and how 'women disrupt the discourses designed to contain them . . . find unauthorized forms of speech . . . exceed the space allotted to them' is equally relevant to the here and now because 'we . . . have no choice to but read [a text] from the present, to produce for it a meaning intelligible from *our own* place in history'. (Parvini 129)

To sum up, this paper is concerned with the political issues in *Macbeth* within the framework of cultural materialism. Cultural materialism is a materialist analysis of culture. It looks at all kinds of contextual evidence to explain a literary text as a material object. From cultural materialist aspect, *Macbeth* is dealt with to recreate the zeitgeist of the Jacobean era, it was written during King James I's reign, therefore, as a material product of Jacobean age, it can be best understood within its historical context. *Macbeth* is not only a study in moral and evil; its socio-political implication with special relevance to the Jacobean period makes it one of the selected tragedies. It explores Shakespeare's interest in the political issues; his reflection of the relevance of kingship as well as challenges to royal power. According to traditional reading, Shakespeare tried to win King James I's approval by dramatizing the objection to king's ideology of divine rights of the kings. On the other hand, Cultural materialist criticism reads *Macbeth* as a fictionalized instrument that gives the idea that different views, perspectives and ideologies existed during James I reign. It brings out how the residual and emergent elements endeavoured within Jacobean culture offered alternatives and new to the dominant culture, how the most common and widely accepted ways that incorporated the dominant beliefs were questioned by the dissidents, marginal, "the others" and the oppressed.

Shakespeare estimated the approaching revolted against the values and structures of the dominant culture; Stuart monarch's losing its power and influence in the 1630s. He presented how his characters questioned the dominant culture in addition to be subject to the dominant social order. Macbeth's tyrannical rule put the absolute authority of the king in suspicion. Cultural materialist criticism reads *Macbeth* as a political analysis that focused on the divine rights of the king, the tyranny of Macbeth, and finally the restoration of peace by Malcolm. It proves that the dynamism of dominant, residual and emergent proves the possibility of going against the dominant.

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