The Theme Of Power In Macbeth

This essay is about how Shakespeare explores the theme of power throughout the play. Macbeth is portrayed as ambitious yet vulnerable because he couldn't keep his drive for power in control. As a result, it ultimately leads to his family's and his own death.

Macbeth's ambitions cause him to lose his conscience and we know this when he describes himself to "have no spur To prick the sides of my intent, but only vaulting ambition, which overleaps itself and falls on th' other'. The metaphor 'vaulting ambition' suggests he has an intense desire for power and reaches the conclusion that he has a lack of motivation, but the only thing driving him present is ambition (which is compared to as a 'vaulting ambition'). The phrase "no spur" suggests that Macbeth has no reasonable justification to murder Duncan but it's his ambition that wins over his conscience and it ends up being his weakness. Also, the phrase "and falls on the other side" compares him to an inexperienced horse rider who vaults so vigorously and ends up falling to the ground; this phrase tells us he is foreseeing that it'll be a serious mistake to murder the king. We associate power and ambition with positive outcomes and achievements, but it can all backfire if you don't keep your drive for power in control, Macbeth didn't.

Macbeth is first presented as a powerful figure from when the witches say "All hail, Macbeth, thou shalt be king hereafter!...So all hail Macbeth and Banquo". The verb "hail" means to welcome or praise enthusiastically so this suggests to the audience that he is praiseworthy. "though shalt be king hereafter" means that Macbeth will be future king, after becoming thane of Glamis and thane of Cawdor which is predicted by the 3 witches. The prophecy also claims that Banquo won't be king, but his descendants will, which angers Macbeth. The audience sense that Macbeth and Banquo are strong, ambitious figures who want the power to accomplish things.

Lady Macbeth is deemed as sly and deceitful from when she gets a letter from Macbeth and learns about the witches and the prophecies. She says to herself "though wouldst be great art not without ambition, but without the illness to attend it". The word "illness" means to have a disease but in this context, it suggests that the illness is ruthlessness and having the ability to kill the king. Lady Macbeth suggests her husband is a great, ambitious man, but he lacks the character traits to take the crown for himself. She knows he is too good of a person so she must influence him and plan out how to kill the king. Plus, the word "holily" (mentioned later on), indicates that Macbeth wants to be a good man, but he wants something that doesn't belong to him.

To sum up the play, Macbeth is consumed with ambition and influence and murders King Duncan to take the Scottish crown for himself; however, he is hit with guilt and fear and eventually ends up being brutally murdered by Macbeth. Shakespeare wrote this play as a tribute to King James and wanted to include topics such as witchcraft, power and ancestry. Shakespeare also may have written Macbeth to support the natural order of events, which if disturbed, would inevitably lead to disaster.