Machiavellianism and Motherhood

Shakespeare's Inversion of Traditional Cultural Roles

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Abstract

The traditional Machiavel of literature, one who gains political power by manipulation of others, has been a male seeking greater political power. Little critical information is available on the female Machiavel, however. Shakespeare creates an inversion of the cultural norm in his time when he combines Machiavellian techniques with motherhood in Margaret of the Henry VI and Richard III tetralogy and Tamora of Titus Andronicus. This inversion represents part of the overall understanding and progressive view that Shakespeare had of the social and political structures facing the women of his time.

With Machiavellian techniques Margaret and Tamora are able to combine their womanly wiles—their sexuality—and manipulate themselves into positions of greater power. Shakespeare adds the motherhood factor to further complicate their identities and demonstrate how far these women are willing to go to revenge the wrongs done to them and/or their children. Their schemes for revenge prove to be their downfall.

Shakespeare’s perceptiveness of the social and political climate of his time gave his audience the opportunity to see what could happen if current social norms were not allowed to continue their natural advancement. By placing the burden of the Machiavellian nature on the women—the mothers—he gave his audience a taste for moving away from traditional patriarchs.
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Machiavellianism and Motherhood

Shakespeare’s Inversion of Traditional Cultural Roles

I. Introduction

The traditional Machiavel of literature, one who gains political power by use of unscrupulous techniques, has been the male seeking greater political power. True to the description of the Machiavel, that use of craft and deceit is justified in pursuing and maintaining political power, the male would use manipulation and covert action to gain control. Critics have examined Shakespeare’s Machiavels for years: Barbara Riebling\(^2\) and Jack D’Amico\(^2\) each discuss Duncan and Macduff in Macbeth; Edward Meyer\(^4\) and Mario Praz\(^5\) separately discuss Aaron in Titus Andronicus, Iago in Othello, and Richard in 3 Henry VI; Stephen Greenblatt\(^6\) discusses Henry V as confirmation of “the Machiavellian hypothesis of the origin of princely power” (20); even Shakespeare’s character, Richard III, refers to himself as a “murderous Machiavel” (3HVI III.ii.193), which strongly suggests that Shakespeare was aware of Niccolo Machiavelli’s The Prince. Collectively these authors illustrate how closely Shakespeare tied his male characters to the Machiavellian persona. Other playwrights of Shakespeare’s time also used the male as the Machiavel figure such as Marlowe in The Jew of Malta.

Not examined, however, is Shakespeare’s female Machiavels. Of the abundance of critical information available on Shakespeare, only a small portion deals with Machiavellianism of the characters. Michael Manheim in The Weak King Dilemma claims that Margaret and Joan of Arc
are part of the "stage Machiavels" (80). Donald Wineke, quoting Machiavelli, refers to Joan of
Arc's military skills: "effectively substituting deceit for valor, a substitution that Machiavelli con-
siders worthy of fame" (Discourses III.40, quoted by Wineke 31). Beyond these passing com-
ments, there is no further discussion, however, connecting Margaret or Tamora, or any of
Shakespeare's female characters with Machiavellianism.

Other critics, Agnes Mure Mackenzie, Natalie Davis, Paula S. Berggren, and Phyllis Rackin
have briefly mentioned this connection. Mackenzie, in discussing Titus Andronicus, refers to
Tamora as "neither person nor woman, but a mere incarnation of a heavy-handed attempt at
Machiavellian ingenious villainy" (6). Other than this passing reference to Tamora, no other
mention is made about female Machiavels in her text. Mackenzie later describes, however,
Richard III as deriving his character from Machiavelli's The Prince (71). Davis suggests a con-
nection between a woman and Machiavellianism when she comments:

Husband-dominators are everywhere in popular literature.... The point about [it] is that
they are funny and amoral: the women are full of life and energy, and they win much of
the time; they stay on top of their fortune with as much success as Machiavelli might
have expected from the Prince of his political tract. (134-35)

Berggren discusses how women can alter their appearance by donning disguises:

the heroine, who can rely on her outfit to shroud her true identity, dresses up with
amused nonchalance, innocent of the calculation typical of the master-disguiser, the
Machiavel. (19-20)

Nothing by Berggren specifically refers to Machiavellianism and the actions of women.

Rackin specifically identifies Margaret of Anjou as one who shares "the Machiavellian attrib-
utes of treachery and selfish, amoral ambition that define them as demonic Others" (75).
Rackin's text deals with the history surrounding Shakespeare and his plays, "resituating [the]
history plays in terms of ... oppositional histories and representing them as a series of negoti-
ations between separate, and often opposed, discursive fields" (xi). Rackin discusses the historiographic Renaissance movement from a providential to a Machiavellian mindset, further intimating that the Machiavellian version of history is more fascinating and holds more possibilities for Shakespeare. Interestingly, however, Rackin appears to contradict herself at length. She states:

Struggling to represent an absent past, my narrative finds that past engaged in a similar struggle, one that anticipates my efforts in the last two chapters to recover the voices of the women and common people who were marginalized or excluded in previous historical writings. (x)

The structure of her book suggests at first that Rackin is doing nothing more than redefining the historical male perspective. A thorough reading of the text reveals that she merely gives further definition to the female characters by situating them in the plays rather than on the perimeter as they traditionally have been seen.

Rackin provides perceptive ideas as to how Shakespeare's male and female characters are an inversion to the social norm and suggests that Shakespeare used the Machiavellian subversion for theatrical effect. While Rackin identifies Margaret as a Machiavel, she does not delve into the play and textually analyze and identify specific instances to prove her claim.

Of the more prominent journals, no evidence of the female Machiavel is discovered to date. Electronic searches of the MLA database since 1963, and manual searches of English bibliographies of the Shakespeare Quarterly since 1950 reveal no mention of the female Machiavel. An electronic search of Dissertation Abstracts since 1861 also reveals no specific mention of the female Machiavel. That is not to say, however, that undiscovered passing comments are not made, nor is it to say that more obscure sources do not discuss this subject. As such, this thesis is presented in an attempt to fill the void in the criticism about the female Machiavel, specif-
ically, Margaret of Anjou in Shakespeare's first tetralogy, the Henry VI plays and Richard III, and Tamora, Queen of the Goths, in Titus Andronicus.

Although the subject of the female Machiavel is interesting in itself, Shakespeare takes it a step further and cleverly ties motherhood with Machiavelli's principles in The Prince to add further dimension to Margaret and Tamora. Then, by inverting the traditional cultural roles, he turns the women into revenge seekers for wrongs done to their children.

Contemporary interpretation of Machiavellianism has taken what used to apply primarily to a way of gaining political power and turned it into a way of achieving revenge against any wrong or injury, not necessarily a politically motivated one. For my purposes here, Machiavellianism is a term used to explain how craft and deceit are justified in pursuing and maintaining political power. Margaret and Tamora as outsiders struggle to build their foundation of power in their new countries. Their use of Machiavellian techniques includes their manipulation of men through their use of their womanly wiles, and their seeking revenge against those who have wronged them or their children.

With this definition in mind, my hypothesis is that Shakespeare deliberately combined Machiavellian techniques and motherhood as an inversion of traditional cultural roles in Margaret of Anjou and Tamora, Queen of Goth, so that their manipulation of men and revenge against those who wronged them or their children would be distinctive of Shakespeare's understanding of the traditional social and political structures facing women of his time.

II. Overview of Machiavelli, Machiavellianism, and Women

To understand how Shakespeare used Machiavellianism and motherhood as an inversion of the traditional cultural roles, one must understand how Machiavellianism evolved. Following are several aspects of Machiavellianism, including social and political. In the collection of es-
says, Machiavellian Intelligence, several authors address the idea that Machiavellianism is more than political acts—it is also social acts. Hans Kummer states: “intelligence... is the use of a third party’s behavior for personal gain” (113). Andrew Whiten and Richard Byrne refer to primates’ use of Machiavellian-style intelligence as a form of social intelligence: “social interaction as a game in which the winner is the one who outwits the other” (6). The social skills necessary to survive include Machiavellian techniques.

The evolution of Machiavellianism is reported to have occurred through both traditional and non-traditional avenues and involved interest in more than just Italian politics. Silvia Ruffo-Fiore traces some of this evolution:

“Machiavellism” and “Machiavellian” pejoratively denote cunning, cruel, hypocritical, unscrupulous, immoral, and deceitful political behavior. Machiavelli's name so used means underhanded, tortuous, intriguing behavior practiced by an atheistic, diabolical opportunist with a potential for homicide. His violent and treacherous character is often encapsulated in the animal symbols of the lion and the fox. Conjoined with the meaning that Machiavellism describes the actions of the despotic tyrant, who rationalizes his acts with claims of benefiting the welfare of the state, is the implication added later that describes the violent or dissembling behavior of any person intent on personal ambition and gain. (130)

Further, Ruffo-Fiore states that the polemic connotations of Machiavelli's work “provided new literary and dramatic material” (141).

While this issue remains controversial, modern critics have been examining the meaning and effects of Machiavellianism and Machiavels. Hanna Fenichel Pitkin states:

Autonomy... is Machiavelli's central preoccupation, the thread that unifies the contradictions and tensions in his works, enlarging the seemingly personal issue of machismo and tying it to his meditations on political themes.... Autonomy... means having or making one's own laws or principles: independence, self-control, self-government, freedom. (7)
Whether or not one associates Machiavelli’s concepts with autonomy has little to do with the overall impact of the acts one commits with regard to a connotative meaning of Machiavellianism.

Niccolo Machiavelli wrote The Prince during the early sixteenth century; it was not translated into English until 1640. Max Lerner describes how the English viewed The Prince:

The Elizabethans got their knowledge of Machiavelli from a French book attacking him, Gentillet’s Anti-Machiavel. And Gentillet gave just enough of Machiavelli to distort him.

(xl)

Distorted or not the English playwrights

were all fascinated by the image they constructed of subtle cunning, of treachery, of the gap between outward seeming and inward being, all of which they thought of as Machiavellianism. (Lerner xxxix)

Gerald Pinciss furthers this by stating that:

Knowledge of Machiavelli’s writings…reached some Elizabethans in the sixteenth century even though the publication of these books, which were considered shocking and controversial, was banned in England. Copies in the original Italian as well as in French and Latin translations crossed the channel and were read avidly, arousing admiration in some and horror in others. (73-74)

With Shakespeare’s use of the basic premise of Machiavellianism, it appears that he fell among those who had “arousing admiration” for Machiavelli’s works.

The premise of Machiavelli’s work, in short, is the unrest in Italy when the republicans were overthrown by the Medici rule. Machiavelli, having held important positions while the republicans ruled, was reduced to idleness and financial discomfort. With Italy divided into separate political factions, Machiavelli wrote The Prince in hope of finding a unifier in the Medici house.

No one rose to Machiavelli’s appeal and Italy continued to have political unrest.
The Prince may have failed in its primary aim, but it succeeded in setting forth a new science of statesmanship—a guideline by which a ruler could establish and maintain a state by studying the past and using modern knowledge (studying one's contemporaries). The ruler would then exploit this knowledge during subsequent political actions.

Machiavelli wrote about the events around him. He watched as bloodshed and treason were turned into order and tranquility by lack of hesitation. It was hesitation that was considered wicked and cruel, not the acts themselves. A man with decisiveness of action deserved the highest praise. D'Amico states: "Machiavelli tells us that men do not know how to be wicked. Shakespeare tells us that in learning how [to be wicked] they may destroy themselves and the state as well." (35).

This part of Machiavelli's theory has been misunderstood for centuries. He has been accused of cruelty and immorality. His accusers, however, have failed to understand the independence of politics. The theory Machiavelli sets forth in The Prince has a great deal to do with morality. Indeed, the politics Machiavelli illustrates has, over the years, developed a morality of its own. Praz describes the concept best:

Machiavelli was no more the inventor of Machiavellism than Graves was the inventor of Grave's disease. Machiavelli supplied a label, a cliché, for describing methods which had been in use since remote antiquity. (96)

Because Machiavelli was so involved with the republicans in rule, he was able to watch what went on behind the scenes; others watched the political figureheads. By watching, Machiavelli learned the intricacies of leadership. Like a finely tuned watch, leadership was successful only with the constant attention given to the details. These details were the power behind the ruler:

Power politics existed before Machiavelli was ever heard of; it will exist long after his name is only a faint memory. What he did... was to recognize its existence and subject it to scientific study. And so his name has become associated with it. (Lerner xliii)
Just as power politics existed long before Machiavelli wrote about it, so too were the roles between men and women clearly defined in history.

The role of the woman was that of the obedient wife and mother: "The ideal woman... was weak, submissive, charitable, virtuous and modest" (Stone 138). Even York's definition of a woman fit into the historical and social mold: "Women are soft, mild, pitiful, and flexible" (3HVI. I.iv.141). The woman's responsibility was the house and the children. Child rearing was a large and important role. These women wielded power in their own ways. Lawrence Stone states: "Their... capacity to give or withhold sexual favors, their control over the children... all gave them useful potential levers of power within the home" (139). Sexuality played a major role in a woman's ability to control her husband. Arlene Saxonhouse describes the woman's role in society as one of the "reproductive being"; the woman's strength was in the womb. She was therefore seen in the "context of her relationship to the family," whereas the man's strength was in being a warrior and carrying arms to battle to protect the family (89).

Part of the Machiavellian concept is that of one being in control, or at least in a position of manipulation of the one in control. Traditionally, the one in control was the male. Michel Foucault, in the study The History of Sexuality states:

if it is true that Machiavelli was among the few... who conceived the power of the Prince in terms of force relationships, perhaps we need to go one step further, do without the persona of the Prince, and decipher power mechanisms on the basis of a strategy that is immanent in force relationships. (97)

Shakespeare's Margaret and Tamora exert force in their relationships. Whether their force has a lasting effect is not as important as the fact that it has a temporary effect. Shakespeare cleverly used the women's force as an inversion of the societal norms of the male wielding the power. Motherhood was an important force in their relationship.
Both Margaret and Tamora understand power; each craves the power traditionally held only by men. Margaret wants to be King but gender would not allow it. Tamora is overtaken and removed from power when captured by Titus and his men, but she quickly moves into a power position when she becomes empress of Rome. Each woman thus fits the role as a player in the game of power politics. Shakespeare adds the element of the female gender in his power politics which gives an interesting twist to how the characters wield power. The women are able to manipulate men through their use of sex as a tool. Foucault describes how sex interrelates in the game:

Power is essentially what dictates its laws to sex...power acts by laying down the rule: power's hold on sex is maintained through language, or rather through the act of discourse that creates, from the very fact that it is articulated, a rule of law. (83)

Power, by definition, applies to the male gender. Shakespeare uses an inversion to this idea by placing Margaret and Tamora in a position to be in power over men, albeit temporarily. The success in gaining this power, however, is based on the uses of their sexuality—their womanly wiles. How successful they are in manipulating the men directly depends upon how effective they are in turning sex into a power-gaining tool.

In their own distinctive way, these women fit Machiavelli's description of the Prince; cunning and thorough in their attention to detail, they combine these traits with Machiavellian approaches to carry out their revenge. Each woman puts on a front of submissiveness, yet behind the scenes does everything necessary to gain power. By coupling revenge with adultery and thus manipulation of a man to help her carry out her mission, each woman is temporarily successful in her quest for power.

Various critics support this analysis. According to Berggren, “the women [in Shakespeare's] tragedy seem to split into two basic types: victims or monsters, 'good' or 'evil'” and that
women who exist in tragedy “must make their mark by rejecting their womanliness” (18). Angela Pitt concurs when she states that “Margaret is totally evil and unnatural because she lacks womanly qualities. In their place she has those that are the glory of a man but grotesque in a woman” (153). Irene Dash states:

The sweetest power a woman can possess is that over herself. Simone de Beauvoir calls it the sense of one’s self as “subject, active, free.” … a woman loses this freedom when she discovers her own sexuality. She then realizes that to fulfill herself sexually, she must think of herself as “Other,” or secondary, and of man as primary, for she lives in a patriarchal society. (4)

I posit, however, that often it is this “womanliness” that enables the women to begin their climb up the power ladder and their acceptance that they are the “other” is their true enemy. Only by the successful manipulation of men do Margaret and Tamora succeed in gaining power. And with this power, these women are able to fulfill their revenge plots to destroy those who have harmed them and/or their families.

By using the text I will demonstrate how both Margaret and Tamora with their womanly wiles and female sexuality manipulate men to gain power. Each woman, when compared with the precepts set forth by Machiavelli in The Prince, climbs to the position traditionally held by men. Shakespeare uses an inversion of the traditional cultural roles in his plays about their rise and fall by adding the element of motherhood to their personalities. He then suggests to his audience that these women may succeed in their mission—avenging their sons’ murders. While the audience does see their mission accomplished, we also see how, in keeping with cultural tradition, the women must fail in the ultimate mission of a quest for power for themselves.

III. Premise of The Prince as it Relates to Margaret’s Power Quest

Shakespeare places Margaret in an awkward position from the start of her commitment to return with Suffolk to England. She recognizes, however, that being the queen opens up many
opportunities for her to do as she wishes. She finds that she must manipulate others to get
what she wants. By applying a Machiavellian technique, Margaret climbs the political ladder,
gains control, and in effect, becomes the female king of England.

Margaret’s role begins as she is introduced in I Henry VI. She is captured by Suffolk and sub-
sequently asked to become Henry’s queen. Marilyn Williamson describes how wooing em-
powers the woman:

The language of courtship in itself conveys power on the woman who is wooed by the
male suitor, but Shakespeare and his contemporaries encoded the language of love so that
for them the woman was especially powerful in such a relationship. (27)

When Margaret agrees, she moves from captive to captor, fulfilling Shakespeare’s role of the
woman holding the power. David Bevington describes Shakespeare’s inversion of power:

“Margaret’s capture leads by a turning of the tables to her enslaving of the English king” (56).
Margaret has, purposely or not, wooed Suffolk and begun her trek in the Machiavellian role of
striving for the highest achievement—being head of the state. Thus begins Shakespeare’s in-
version of Margaret’s role of queen of England. Committed by gender to be queen, she recog-
nizes that Suffolk can be easily swayed to her side. She is following the Machiavellian role of
establishing military power to lay the foundation for conquering new territory.

According to Machiavelli in The Prince, “when a powerful foreigner enters a province, all the
less powerful inhabitants become his adherents” (10). Margaret, soon to become the queen, is
the outsider entering England. With Shakespeare’s inversion, some of those under her rank of
queen appear to shift their support to her.

Textually, Shakespeare indicates that Margaret is indeed a Machiavel following the training
well. In II Henry VI she not only gains the apparent support of those under her when, on their
knees, they proclaim: “Long live Queen Margaret, England’s happiness!” (1.3.7), but also demon-
strates the Machiavellian trait of pacifying new principalities by going there to live to keep the
government friendly (18). Coming into an England under the protectorship of the Duke of
Gloucester, she little understands, however, who is the true wearer of the crown.

Margaret soon accidentally discovers that the Duke of Gloucester is the de facto head of
state. Logically then, the Duchess of Gloucester is the de facto Queen of England. Upon this
discovery, Margaret realizes that Henry is an oppressed king, but that appearances weigh more
with the public. Machiavelli states: "it is very difficult to conspire against one who has a great
reputation" (67). The Duke is a man of great reputation, so Margaret recognizes that he will
not be easy to deal with. Enraged with the realization that she yields virtually no power, she
unleashes her wrath in Suffolk's presence:

What! Shall King Henry be a pupil still
Under the surly Gloucester's governance?
Am I a queen in tide and in style,
And must be made a subject to a duke? (2H6 I.iii.48-51)

Margaret amplifies her rage to Suffolk:

Not all these lords do vex me half so much
As that proud dame, the Lord Protector's wife:
She sweeps it through the court with troops of ladies,
More like an empress than Duke Humphrey's wife,
Strangers in court do take her for the queen.
She bears a duke's revenues on her back,
And in her heart she scorns our poverty. (77-83)

By these statements, Margaret is setting the stage for her first act of securing the power of
the state. Being second to a woman like the Duchess is more than Margaret can bear. She
realizes that she must gain control of the throne from the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester.
Dash describes Margaret's logic:
She knows that she has one friend, Suffolk, whose powers seem tremendous because he converted a prisoner into a queen and acquired lands for her father. She believes Gloucester, not York, to be her greatest enemy. Politically naive, and scorned as a dismissable commodity, she eventually stumbles into the traps laid by Henry's enemies. First, however, she will seek to exercise the power—the command over others, the authority, the ascendancy, that she thinks she has. (164)

Recognizing that her obstacles are people whom others respect, Margaret knows that merely disempowering them would not be enough—she has to destroy their reputations as well. Thus continues Margaret's trek into the world of the Machiavel—one who spends one's time in constant planning and plotting of ways to dissemble the enemy forces (Machiavelli 55).

Virtue and fortune are also part of the Machiavellian code: virtue meaning courage, efficiency, talent, strength, ability, and intelligence; fortune meaning the ability to read a situation and play it to its own advantage as well as having the ability to "let things be ruled by chance" (Machiavelli 91). York is every bit the true Machiavel. He possesses all of the characteristics necessary to succeed in the Machiavellian scheme. Margaret, however, lacks the one element necessary to be a true Machiavel—gender. Being a woman she will never fulfill Machiavelli's gender criterion. But in other ways, Margaret is a genuine Machiavel. Showing this genuine Machiavellian nature, Margaret's virtue and fortune establish themselves as her guides in matters of becoming the true head of state. Patience is key in her plan to eliminate the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester. Manheim states: "The key to all Machiavellian design is patience, the knowing when to act" (81). By waiting, Margaret and the Duke of York are able to trap the Duchess in her "Dealing[s] with witches and with conjurors" (2HVI II.i.170).

At the appropriate time, Margaret plants the idea for further steps to be taken to rid herself of Gloucester. She appeals to the others' sense of Machiavellianism and desire for elimi-
nating Gloucester from the actual reign. She suggests eliminating the fear she and her cohorts have of him:

Believe me, lords, were none more wise than I—
And yet herein I judge mine own wit good—
This Gloucester should be quickly rid the world,
To rid us from the fear we have of him. (2HVI III.i.231-234)

Her supporters, eager to please, rise to the challenge and begin making plans to murder Gloucester, thus demonstrating their own Machiavellian inclinations.

The Duke of York, Suffolk, and the Cardinal are all a part of Shakespeare’s Machiavellian roles. As men, they fit the traditional role of the true Machiavel and are readily accepted by the audience. Margaret, however, is an inversion to this traditional role. Without the men realizing what is happening, she is using the very same Machiavellian techniques to get them to help her with her plan. Interlaced with the Machiavellian principles are the womanly wiles she applies, especially to Suffolk, to further her own plans.

The Duke of York, Suffolk, and the Cardinal rally together to devise a plan. York reveals to the audience in an aside that he has his own reasons for wanting the Duke of Gloucester dead—so that he can overtake Henry himself and become king, to which he believes he is the rightful heir. York uses the analogy of Gloucester being the bird of prey to protect Henry’s reign from outsiders—including Gloucester himself.

At this point in the play Shakespeare uses animals to symbolize that Margaret is a true Machiavel. Machiavelli states:

there are two methods of fighting, the one by law, the other by force: the first method is that of men, the second of beasts; but as the first method is often insufficient, one must have recourse to the second. It is therefore necessary for a prince to know well how to use both the beast and the man. (64)
After York's query as to the proper placement of a bird of prey ("an empty eagle ... / To guard the chicken from a hungry kite" [2H6 III.i.248-249]) as a protector, Margaret replies: "So, the poor chicken [Henry, the one Gloucester is supposed to be protecting] should be sure of death" (2H6 III.i.251). To which Suffolk replies:

Madam, 'tis true; and were't not madness, then,
To make the fox surveyor of the fold?
Who being accused a crafty murderer,
His guilt should be but idly posted over,
Because his purpose is not executed.
No; let him die, in that he is a fox,
By nature proved an enemy to the flock. (252-58)

Suffolk is saying that Gloucester is like a hungry fox sent to watch over the flock of sheep, to which Margaret agrees. This reveals another of Margaret's Machiavellian traits. Manheim describes this animal concept: "Machiavellianism is thoroughly animal, both in its cunning and its brutality" (184). Here, Margaret is the beast. She is relying on the laws of nature to prompt her supporters in her cause. The feminine law of nature—femininity and sexuality—have put Suffolk on her side. But York is also a beast. He and Margaret are the Machiavellian personification of animals and animal traits:

A prince being ... obliged to know well how to act as a beast must imitate the fox and the lion, for the lion cannot protect himself from traps, and the fox cannot defend himself from wolves. One must therefore be a fox to recognize traps, and a lion to frighten wolves. (64)

Although Suffolk refers to Gloucester as a fox, it is more in the context of the hungry animal feeding on smaller more timid animals. Machiavelli's fox is the animal with cunning and an enjoyment of solitude—one that is able to recognize when assistance is needed to accomplish his goals and to be able to manipulate others to attain those goals. Margaret and York are
both the lion and the fox. They each recognize their need for the other's help in achieving their own goals.

Just as the lion connotes king of the animal kingdom, the fox connotes cunning. Upon the discovery of Gloucester's death, Margaret is both the lion and the fox. She has cleverly put herself in a position of control over Henry, who is now the actual King. But her actions reveal to Henry her true character:

Her arrogance, wiliness, self-confidence, dissimulation, quick-wittedness, and tenderness all appear here. Her reaction to the King's response to news of Gloucester's death is a remarkable inversion of values... Reprimanding her husband for his swooning at the news of Gloucester's death, she speaks of her unhappiness and the suspicion that will fall on her—the slanderous tongues that will now try to accuse her of Gloucester’s death because she did not like him. (Dash 175-76)

She has, in effect, however, outfoxed herself, as the King, upon accusations that Suffolk was the murderer, banishes him from England. Her reactions to Gloucester's death and Henry's grieving conflict directly with her reaction to Suffolk's banishment. As she begs Henry not to banish him, Margaret realizes how little power she actually has over Henry at this point. Significantly, her army is decreased by one and York is quickly moving in on the throne in attempts to overtake Henry and take his place as rightful heir. But Margaret is still a power to be reckoned with. Now, Gloucester is out of the way and she remains the one who has come closest to the head of state.

Gloucester's death reveals the coldness of how Margaret works behind the scenes to accomplish her goal. Besides the ruthlessness of the murder itself, she shows absolutely no compassion for Henry's loss. Her response to Henry's pain is cold and self-centered:
Be woe for me, more wretched than he is [Gloucester].
What, dost thou turn away and hide thy face?
I am no loathsome leper; look on me.
What! Art thou, like the adder, waxen deaf?
Be poisonous too, and kill thy forlorn queen.
Is all thy comfort shut in Gloucester’s tomb?
Why, then, Dame Margaret was ne’er thy joy. (2HVI III.ii.73-79)

But Margaret’s heartlessness falls upon deaf ears.

At the root of Margaret’s power is her belief in herself. Bevington states: “Men do not faze her, though she knows how to appeal to their sense of masculinity and possessiveness” (56). Although Suffolk is in the picture, she is a strong woman in and of herself. Manheim describes the Machiavellian influence:

Political leaders were victims of a kind of double-think whereby they sincerely believed themselves true and devout Christians at the same time that they felt increasingly justified in ignoring Christian precepts in political dealings. What once might have been considered hypocrisy was coming to be thought of as policy. (80)

Ordering the murder of Gloucester is the “justified in ignoring” of the Christian beliefs held so strongly by Henry. Margaret was merely carrying out the “policy” of the kingdom while Henry worshipped.

When Margaret loses Suffolk permanently, Henry chides her that had he been the one to die, she would “not have mourned so much” for him (2H6 IV.iv.24). But Margaret, the cunning woman that she is, recognizes the time to pay proper respect to Henry’s position and reveals to him her tender side. She states: “No my love, I should not mourn, but die for thee” (25). By honoring Henry so, she continues her ascent toward total power over him by the manipulation of his feelings.
As Margaret's power grows, so does her disgust for Henry's weakness. During a battle at St. Albans where the Duke of Somerset is killed, the queen chastises Henry for his refusal to fight or flee:

What are you made of? You'll nor fight nor fly:
Now is it manhood, wisdom, and defense,
To give the enemy way, and to secure us
By what we can, which can no more but fly. . . .
If you be ta'en, we then should see the bottom
Of all our fortunes: but if we haply 'scape—
As well we may, if not through your neglect—
We shall to London get, where you are loved
And where this breach now in our fortunes made
May readily be stopped. (2HIV,ii,74-83)

Forced to make a move, she pushes Henry toward their return to London. There, surrounded by his and, ultimately, her supporters, she hopes to fend off York's attempts to dethrone Henry. Once again, Margaret shows herself as a Machiavel. In The Prince Machiavelli states:

a powerful and courageous prince will always overcome those difficulties by now raising the hopes of his subjects that the evils will not last long, now impressing them with fear of the enemy's cruelty, now by dextrously assuring himself of those who appear too bold. (40-41)

York has overstepped the bounds of proper decorum and Margaret is taking the necessary steps to solidify her position as would be head of state, thus beginning Margaret's battle with a true Machiavel. By warning Henry and those supporters in London of York's attempts, she fulfills the Machiavellian trait of preparedness.

As Henry's impotence hinders his ability to reign, Margaret steps closer to the throne. The York faction, however, holds her attention over the battle for power and rule of the kingdom. Judith Cook writes:
There is nothing in common between the monk-like King and the sexy, politically minded Margaret, who becomes increasingly ruthless and obsessive as the Yorkists and Lancastrians drag out their endless wars. (71)

The battle over who will rule the kingdom is not between Henry and Margaret, but rather between the Yorks and Margaret.

Like the Machiavel, Margaret succeeds in rising in power. She has eliminated all those who were peripheral threats to her success. Now the true enemy is revealed—the Yorks. Shakespeare has set the stage for a male/female Machiavel battle to take place. The inversion thus far succeeds with the audience in that Margaret's success is believable, her manipulative ways have given her control over Henry, and now she must deal with York on his own level.

IV. Tamora as the Machiavel

The audience is introduced to Tamora, Queen of Goth, mother of five sons. We see immediately that she has begged for her first born son's life without success. Shakespeare quickly moves to illustrate Tamora's Machiavellian nature. In her, the mother force is the predominate element in her Machiavellian mindset. Shakespeare's inversion of the cultural norm gives way for Tamora to set out against Titus for the murder of her son. But, like a scorned woman, she lashes out at Titus in Machiavellian ways, while using her womanly wiles to gain help from others along the way.

On many levels Tamora exhibits the same Machiavellian characteristics as Margaret. For example, each woman uses everything in her power to achieve Machiavelli's highest position, that of head of state. As Tamora openly manipulates Saturninus, she also works behind his back with Aaron to try to achieve her goal—power in the ultimate sense. Interestingly, Shake-
speare gives Tamora several virtues by which she aligns her forces. Her strongest Machiavellian virtue of intelligence designs her revenge on another of her gender, thus illustrating the cruel and inhuman lengths she is willing to go to conquer those who harmed her and to avenge her son's death.

Tamora is captured by Titus and is forced to beg for her son's life, to no avail. Like Margaret, Tamora is taken to a new land and is the "Other"—the outsider; one who has to adjust to survive. Machiavelli states that Others must "be careful that they do not assume too much power and authority" (10) because those already in power have an army behind them that is powerful enough to rescind any power that may threaten their position or that of their leader. Tamora is quick to grasp this limitation. When her pleas to save her son's life go unheeded, she quickly accepts Saturninus's offer of marriage:

And here in sight of heaven to Rome I swear,
If Saturnine advance the Queen of Goths,
She will be a handmaid to his desires,
A loving nurse, a mother to his youth. (Tit. i.i.330-33)

Now she has Saturninus under her manipulative powers, but, at the same time, allows him to be the speaker for those things she desires.

Shakespeare sets Tamora on an arduous course. Her life has been a series of drastic changes over a brief period of time: her kingdom is conquered and she is captured, her eldest son is murdered, and she is made empress of Rome. Each of these could cause significant emotions to evolve, but the combination should devastate all but the strongest. But instead of Tamora coping with these changes by descending into subservience, Shakespeare takes this character and turns her into a true Machiavel.
Tamora is like Margaret in that she, too, uses her womanly wiles to get her way with a man. Douglas Green states: “Tamora’s aside to Saturninus exposes the dangers of this woman’s subtle power … and exposes as well her intention” (320). Tamora states:

My lord, be ruled by me, be won at last,
Dissemble all your griefs and discontents—
You are but newly planted in your throne—
Lest then the people, and patricians too,
Upon a just survey, take Titus’s part,
And so supplant you for ingratitude,
Which Rome reapes to be a heinous sin.
Yield at entreats: and then let me alone.
I’ll find a day to massacre them all…
To whom I sued for my dear son’s life;
And make them know what ’tis to let a queen
Kneel in the streets and beg for grace in vain. (l.i.443-450 453-456)

Here, Tamora is exhibiting a valuable trait set forth in The Prince:

it is necessary for a prince, who wishes to maintain himself, to learn how not to be good, and to use this knowledge, and not use it, according to the necessity of the case. (56)

Using her womanliness, she convinces Saturninus that she is an asset to him in his new position. Agnes Mure Mackenzie, however, states that “Tamora is neither person nor woman, but a mere incarnation of a heavy-handed attempt at Machiavellian ingenious villainy” (6). But her behind-the-scenes manipulation goes further. She is also wooing him so that when she bears Aaron’s son she will be able to smooth things over quickly.

Now that Tamora has Saturninus’s heart and ear, she follows one of the traits set forth in The Prince:
Princes, and especially new ones, have found more faith and more usefulness in those men, whom at the beginning of their power they regarded with suspicion, than in those they at first confided in. (79)

Saturninus is that person she regards with suspicion. By using him to get what she wants from Bassianus and Lavinia, an invitation to a hunt in the woods with them the following day, Tamora is able to set up her next move.

By participating in the hunt, Bassianus and Lavinia provide Tamora with the perfect opportunity to avenge her son's murder. After a conference with Aaron, her lover, the plan is set: he invents the scheme, she instructs (and encourages) her sons to murder Bassianus, rape Lavinia, and disfigure her so that she cannot reveal her perpetrators. Again the Machiavel, Tamora exhibits the cruelty set forth in The Prince:

A prince, therefore, must not mind incurring the charge of cruelty for the purpose of keeping his subjects united and faithful. (60)

Aaron and Tamora's conference reveals that Tamora and Aaron have a relationship greater than friendship. Prior to that, however, Aaron's meeting with Tamora's sons reveals that he, too, is a true Machiavel. He is the first to suggest that Tamora's sons rape Lavinia:

There will the lovely Roman ladies troop:
The forest walks are wide and spacious,
And many unfrequented plots there are
Fitted by kind for rape and villainy.
Single you thither then this dainty doe,
And strike her home by force, if not by words. (Tit. II.i.113-118)

Being part of the force that Titus captured when he took Tamora prisoner, Aaron has a certain amount of loyalty for Tamora. Although he, too, is a Machiavel, Tamora is able to use her womanly wiles on him to persuade him to her ways. With no regard of the consequences to
an innocent victim, Titus's cub, Tamora lashes out in genuine Machiavellian style to harm Titus in the same way he harmed her; by injuring in a way that would eventually kill one of his own flesh and blood. With Aaron on her side, she is able to accomplish this feat with little effort of her own.

As in 2H6, Shakespeare again uses animals to illustrate how closely tied to Machiavelli's teachings these women are. In Titus, Lavinia refers to Tamora as a tiger (II.iii.142), a lion (151), and a "beastly creature" (182), following the Machiavellian idea of "two methods of fighting ... that of men ... [and] of beasts" (64). Albert Tricomi compares Tamora to Margaret when she is accused by York of being a tigress. Tricomi states that Tamora's sons are referred to as:

the "empress' tiger cubs" (II.iii.142-47) and "bear-whelps" (IV.i.96). Through such blazoned images as these, Tamora and her brood are depicted as savage carnivores preying upon the Andronici, who are the flesh and blood of civilized Rome. (99)

But Tamora is the lion of the beasts in that she has the strength of her sons behind her to carry out her despicable deed on Lavinia. Like the lion, Tamora herself is a carnivore. Through Titus's trick she devours her own children at a meal where she believes she has outfoxed the fox—Titus.

Shakespeare continues his inversion giving the reader the opportunity to question who ultimately is the fox in the play. Tamora maintains the strength of the lion as she commands her sons to "satisfice their lust" (II.iii.180) with Lavinia, but must continue to keep watch on Titus and his fox-like actions. So while the cubs of the lion ravage the lamb, the lioness enjoys having control of her brood.

In discussing rape in Shakespeare's plays, Catharine Stimpson states:

Because in Shakespeare only well-born women are raped, their violation becomes one of property, status, and symbolic worth as well. . . . Because men rape what other men pos-
sess, rape becomes in part a disastrous element of male rivalry. The woman's body is a prize in a zero-sum game that men play. (58)

Tamora, through controlling her sons, now possesses Titus's "property," his formerly chaste and now tainted daughter. As a woman is held "unwillingly responsible" (Stimpson 59) for a rape, Titus thus suffers the ultimate pain, that of taking his own daughter's life because "the girl should not survive her shame" (V.iii.41). Just as Tamora suffers from the death of her son, so now must Titus suffer not only from his daughter's death (figuratively, in the sense of the rape being the death of a woman, and literally), but also from the fact that he was the one who took her life. Natalie Strong and Carolyn Swift state that "Lavinia has no choice but to allow men to determine her fate, she becomes dangerously entangled in their struggle for power" (219). But Tamora is the one who wields the power. Machiavelli notes: "it is much safer to be feared than loved" (61). Tamora and her sons are feared by Lavinia and this fear reinforces Tamora's power. She commands this rape to take place, thereby placing herself on the male level of power over a woman. With Lavinia as her pawn, Tamora now controls Titus.

Because social mores stipulate that Lavinia could not live with her shame, Titus has lost control over Lavinia—he must do what society dictates. Pitkin explains this honor and society ideal:

Women are a danger for conquerors ... because they are invested with other men's sense of honor. Each woman is attached to at least one man—husband, father, brother—whose honor is at stake in her chastity. The ruler who cannot or will not leave the women of his subjects alone is toying with one of the most dangerous sources of potential opposition. That is why the prince must never "seize upon the property and the women of his subjects"; men will put up with almost anything so long as they "are not deprived of either property or honor." Property is property, but women are both property and honor. (118)

Tamora's son dies free from shame; Lavinia dies, but Titus lives on (temporarily) with a shame that also provides Tamora with power over Titus.
V. Motherhood

Shakespeare further complicates his characters' roles when he adds motherhood to their identities. Now he has placed not only women in power-seeking roles, but he has also placed mothers in both power-seeking and revenge-seeking roles. In doing so, he has completely inverted the ideal of an Elizabethan woman.

In *Henry VI, Part Three* Margaret undergoes a significant change. Heretofore she has assumed surrogate mother roles, but now, for the first time in her life, she has become a biological mother, having given birth to the heir to the throne. Her surrogate mother roles included being the mother of England, as Queen, and mothering Henry. The King is living an ecclesiastical life, devoting more time to God than tending to the welfare of his country. Margaret assumes, in part, the role of mothering Henry to protect him from the rigors of daily life, thus enabling him to practice his worship. At the same time, she participates in a power struggle over running the country with those who had leadership roles before she married Henry.

According to Machiavelli, there is nothing superior to the state, which is self-sufficient and absolutely supreme; as such, one must love the state more than one's own soul. Shakespeare takes this concept one step further. The genesis of a state—or the birth of a state—presents these women as the mothers of the state. By combining the highest achievement of Man with the superiority of the state over everything, the wars waged for control of the state become the nurturing process of the state from the motherhood of these women. Both Margaret and Tamora are outsiders brought to their new lands and are waging the wars of control over their new states, thus becoming the mothers of the states. Shakespeare's inversion places Margaret in two simultaneous peaks, as a mother and as head of state, while to Machiavelli, the former is secondary to the latter.
In examining the traditional roles of women during Shakespeare's time, Karen Newman writes a comprehensive text comparing the views of different religions and the views of popular authors of Early Modern England. Biblical views of a woman's role maintain that a woman should hold her husband as she holds the Lord: "a good wife is the crown of her husband" (Proverbs 12:4, quoted in Newman 15). Newman furthers this thought:

A crown is first an ornament for the head. Worn not simply for personal adornment, it is a mark of the wearer's honor or achievement. A good wife, then, is a mark of her husband's achievement, and the handbooks' emphasis on the role of the husband in educating and molding his wife to obedience, submission, and good housewifery witnesses such a view of that rule. (15)

Newman compares the metaphor of the crown with "a token worn by a monarch as a sign of sovereignty" (15), intimating the husband as king of the household. Taking this concept a step further, one must conclude that the crown could also be compared with the figurehead of the Church and the wearing of the crown by Jesus Christ. Just as a woman should be obedient to her husband, she should be obedient to the Church.

Shakespeare's contemporaries and their predecessors wrote a great deal on the roles of women. In Two Marriage Sermons (1623), Thomas Gataker states that women are the "objects of male desire and dependent on that desire for their status, livelihood, even their lives" (quoted in Newman 7). Gataker details instructions on choosing a wife and then glosses the Proverbs to explain the duties of a wife: "subjection, obedience, silence, chastity" then further intimates that "a woman who is not a wife indeed is to blame for her husband's adulteries and their effects, here the syphilitic body" (9). The double standard, however, is that the woman must practice chastity—monogamy—if her husband strays from her and participates in adulterous relationships, she, not her husband, is to blame.
Various authors of Shakespeare's time focus on specific qualities desired in a woman. William Whately touted the silent woman; Thomas Becon strongly disapproved of the adulterous woman and the woman who exhibits a want of sexual activity; and John Wing spoke of obedience to her husband (quoted in Newman 10, 11, 15). Shakespeare found himself in the midst of all of these opinions; yet his writing shows evidence that he was also influenced by the fact that England was under the rule of Queen Elizabeth I during most of his life.

The power Elizabeth I wielded was in stark contrast to the roles of other women of the period. Using what he observed in his society, Shakespeare set about writing about Margaret and Tamora as inversions of the stereotype. Using power as their motivator, he puts these women in non-traditional situations and expands their capabilities by giving them a male characteristic—the ability to be as ruthless as men in their quest for power. The difference, however, is that these women are able to use womanly wiles—sexuality—to persuade and manipulate the men who are their stepping-stones to power. Shakespeare complicates the plot by adding the motherhood factor to these women. Now, not only do they seek power for themselves, Margaret seeks power for her son, the heir to the throne, and sets out for revenge when this power line is cut by Henry. Tamora, conversely, seeks revenge for her son's death and the ability to accomplish this revenge is grounded on the power she gains by marrying Saturninus.

The additional characteristic of motherhood Shakespeare gives these women brings into full bearances their womanhood. Jeanne Addison Roberts describes the cultural views of the woman's role:

Women were seen as closer than men to animals in the Great Chain of Being, barely rational and dominated by passion and appetite. They were the vessels that carried male fertility to fruition. ... Woman's fertility, her cyclical anatomical processes, and her subordinate position in most societies confirmed her closeness to Nature and reinforced the view that she was to be controlled by male Culture. (25-26)
Indeed, they are the means to the procreation of male heirs. Becoming a mother changes a woman significantly. She no longer has solely her husband to care for; now she has a helpless being fully dependent upon her. "This was … a culture in which infants routinely died" (Adelman 4). This rocky start for the infant put more stress on the mother. Simone de Beauvoir best describes the connection between motherhood and power: "There are some women who say that childbirth gives them a sense of creative power" (506).

Margaret also must contend with the pressure of having produced the sole heir to the throne of England. Tamora has five sons but is made to watch while the eldest is murdered. Each woman suffers from the plight of motherhood: undying love for a child for whom they will do anything and if that child is harmed in any way, nothing can stop her from seeking revenge against the one inflicting that harm. As mothers, Margaret and Tamora seek revenge for the wrongs against their sons.

Shakespeare has chosen to give these women the power of motherhood. With all of the traditional cultural roles these women must fulfill, Shakespeare inverts the traditional power these women wield and adds Machiavellianism to their characters. Now they are mothers of children, mothers of states, and are quickly gaining in their quest for pushing aside the men so that they, the women, can take control over what Machiavelli considers the highest position of all—the state.

VI. Motherhood’s Impact on Margaret

Margaret begins using her Machiavellian techniques before she becomes a mother. For Margaret, having a child puts her into a different category. Becoming a mother adds another dimension to her personhood, another dimension to the already complex woman who
exhibits traditional male ideas and goals. In adding this dimension to her, Shakespeare completely inverts the cultural norm. He places Margaret in a male-centered world and allows her to develop her power through traditionally male ways.

The contest over the throne sets Margaret into a revenge mode. When Henry barters with York to allow him to reign as long as he lives and York to take over upon his death, disinheriting her son, Margaret accuses Henry of being unfit for fatherhood:

Ah, wretched man! Would I had died a maid,
And never seen thee, never borne thee son,
Seeing thou hast proved so unnatural a father!
Hath he deserved to lose his birthright thus?
Hadst thou but loved him half so well as I,
Or felt that pain which I did for him once,
Or nourished him as I did with my blood,
Thou wouldst have left thy dearest heart-blood there,
Rather than have made that savage duke thine heir
And disinherited thine only son. (3H6 I.i.216-225)

Here, Margaret claims the traditional role of mother, reminding Henry of the physical pain she endures while inflicting upon him the emotional pain of what he has done. Then when Henry claims York forced him to make this move, Margaret explodes into a tirade of threats and promises, and sets a tone for the seed of revenge to sprout. Although Margaret herself wields unusual power as a woman, she accuses Henry of being weak. She quickly recognizes, however, that she must accept the fact that she is a woman and her non-traditional powers do not bear enough strength to go against the traditional social roles. Unleashing her anger on Henry, she lashes out at him:
Art thou king, and wilt be forced?
I shame to hear thee speak. Ah, timorous wretch!
Thou hast undone thyself, thy son, and me....
Had I been there, which am a silly woman,
The soldiers should have tossed me on their pikes
Before I would have granted to that act.
But thou preferr'st thy life before thine honor:
And seeing thou dost, I here divorce myself
Both from thy table, Henry, and thy bed,
Until that act of parliament be repealed
Whereby my son is disinherited.
The northern lords, that have forsworn thy colors,
Will follow mine, if once they see them spread;
And spread they shall be, to thy foul disgrace
And utter ruin of the house of York. (3HVI, I.i.230-32, 243-54)

Shakespeare's foreboding of the "ruin of the house of York" (254) sets the tone for the likely downfall of Margaret as well as the Duke of York. Cook states: "Margaret is a truly tragic character because in her overriding desire for power and domination are the seeds of her tragedy" (73). This tragedy begins with the disinheritance of her son by his own father, the King, and by the decapitation of her lover, Suffolk by the Yorks.

Margaret has had a difficult role. As wife to a man whose father died when he was a mere nine months, Margaret's role as mother is stretched beyond the traditional sense. Because of Henry's intense devotion to God, his role as a father is subordinate to that of being a son of God. Therefore, in actuality Henry is dead from his son's perspective, which means that Margaret has to assume both roles: that of mother and father. Because of her power over both her son and Henry, there is little protection for their son from the mother—
Henry is not a strong enough figure to intervene and protect his son from Margaret's non-traditional feminine role or her greed and quest for power.

Margaret's unusual motherly nature affects Suffolk as well. Shortly before the Cardinal's death, Suffolk laments over Margaret's command to leave her and reveals how, for him, Margaret's love is life-giving:

If I depart from thee I cannot live;
And in thy sight to die, what were it else
But like a pleasant slumber in thy lap?
Here could I breathe my soul into the air,
As mild and gentle as the cradle babe
Dying with mother's dug between its lips
Where, from thy sight, I should be raging mad,
And cry out for thee to close up mine eyes,
To have thee with thy lips to stop my mouth. (2H6 Ill.ii.388-96)

Shakespeare is clearly suggesting that Margaret is a mother-figure for Suffolk. Here, Suffolk speaks metaphorically of nursing at her breast. Then, when Margaret appears on stage cradling Suffolk's head after York had decapitated him, Shakespeare, raising the possibility of Margaret's motherly possessiveness and obsession, presents the image of the mother cradling the child as though comforting her child and herself. Janet Adelman indicates that Suffolk's outburst comes unexpectedly, is very extraneous, and is so atypical of the text that it is "urgently intrusive." She further states:

For Suffolk, lover and mother fuse; and death is tolerable only insofar as it is imagined as union with this ideally nurturant figure. Madness, he suggests, is the only alternative to this vision. . . . Shakespeare elaborates both the madness Suffolk hints at and the danger inherent in this maternal body. (117)

Although Adelman also refers to Margaret as "an agent of death" (117), she merely states the obvious—Margaret has caused the death of several who were in her way to the Machiavellian
zenith of head of state. What Adelman does not discuss is how closely intertwined is Margaret’s malevolence toward those who threatened her son’s ascension to the throne. One could argue that motherhood gets in the way of her power quest. I contend, however, that motherhood is the drive behind Margaret’s decisions. Power is at the root of motherhood because the power of creation is the level even higher than Machiavelli’s highest position of head of state. Shakespeare also knew this difference and illustrates it by showing Margaret’s Machiavellian tendencies in combination with her motherhood and her overall creation of her power.

Showing her resiliency, Margaret quickly resumes her power-rich role and begins issuing commands to her son and to Henry:

Come, son, let’s away.
Our army is ready; come, we’ll after them.

King Henry
Stay, gentle Margaret, and hear me speak.

Queen Margaret
Thou has spoke too much already, get thee gone.

(3H6 I.1. 255-58)

Her use of “our” in describing whose army it is, as well as her command to Henry as though he were a subordinate rather than the King of England, illustrate how quickly Margaret reasserts her power role. Ready to take charge and protect her son’s inheritance, she, unlike Henry, is ready to battle York and his faction for possession of the throne.

These episodes begin Margaret’s true revenge plot. Heretofore, all plotting had been for gaining power. Now, with a dead lover and a wounded cub, she is the fierce tigress that York proclaims her to be. Juliet Dusinberre states:
Women parry powerlessness by becoming adept plotters, channelling into premeditation the energy which men expend in performance. Feminine cunning is proverbial. (282)

Her premeditation involves persuading others to do her dirty work. Margaret plots her revenge on York and his sons as the Lancasters, under Margaret’s lead, and the Yorks battle over the right to the throne.

Motherhood for Margaret is reserved for only those close to her. Suffolk, Henry, and her son are all involved in her power quest in that they do not pose a threat. Suffolk is no threat because she was able to manipulate him. Henry is too weak of a king to be a threat. And her son is no threat because she will always be his mother and therefore mother to the king when Henry steps down or dies. Anna Jameson describes how Margaret’s position of mother prevails in her heart:

The bloody struggle for power, in which she was engaged, and the companionship of the ruthless iron men around her, seem to have left her nothing of womanhood but the heart of a mother—that last stronghold of our feminine nature! (250)

When others intrude into this sacred territory of Margaret’s heart, it is as if she has no heart.

When one of York’s sons is killed by Clifford, Margaret, in a totally heartless move, taunts York with a handkerchief stained with York’s sons’ blood.

[We]here is your darling, Rudand?
Look, York, I stained this napkin with the blood
That valiant Clifford, with his rapier’s point,
Made issue from the bosom of the boy;
And if thine eyes can water for his death,
I give thee this to dry thy cheeks withal.
Alas, poor York! but that I hate thee deadly,
I should lament thy miserable state. (3HVI l.iv.78-85)
Obviously she doesn't lament York's grief. Dusinberre states that Margaret's taunting of York "is performed with ... fine-scale, torture-chamber thoroughness" (301).

Instead of expressing remorse for York's loss, Margaret exerts her power and derides him to try to make him exhibit a weakness—emotion over his loss. The molehill scene shows that Margaret:

- is more than a political threat. In York's famous denunciation speech sexual horror overwhelms the political issues.... [His] speech defines a female norm against which Margaret is found wanting. (Bamber 137-38)

Margaret has had no role model by which to act a woman or a queen. The male role models exhibit the social mores standard to the traditional king and Machiavels. Margaret has encountered York at a point where he is suffering a great loss. But she provides him no sympathy—motherly or womanly. Instead, she moves to eliminate a force opposing her journey toward power as head of state. She, in a final movement of total brutality, participates in stabbing York to death.

When Margaret tells Henry of York's death, he quickly delivers a prayer: "Withhold revenge, dear God! 'Tis not my fault" (3H6 II.i.7) as though he knew that Margaret had somehow played a part in the death. Moments later, Henry intimates Margaret's sad future when he states to Clifford: "things ill got had ever bad success" (II.i.46).

Margaret has eliminated one York from the contest over the throne, but she has others to contend with. To build up the strength of her army, Margaret has Henry keep his promise and knight their son. The young prince now dubbed a knight fits into de Beauvoir's description of how a mother pushes to get only what she thinks best for her son:

- the child is a double, an alter ego, into whom the mother is sometimes tempted to project herself entirely....
They try to make him like, or unlike, their husbands, or they wish him to resemble other admired relatives; they try to make him in the image of some hero....

Because of the prestige attributed to men by women... many women prefer to have sons. "How wonderful to bring a man into the world!" they say; we have seen that they dream of engendering a "hero," and the hero is obviously of the male sex. A son will be a leader of men, a soldier, a creator; he will bend the world to his will, and his mother will share his immortal fame.... Through him she will possess the world—but only on condition that she possess her son. (512, 514, 516)

Margaret is pushing her son to be that "hero." Because she has had no role models, she is modeling her son after herself; she is the example of the "man" she wants him to be—the Machiavel.

To try to secure aid to help defeat Edward, the self-appointed new King of England, Margaret travels to France to persuade King Lewis to send troops. In her time of need, Margaret humbles herself to Lewis. She tells him of her plight, but fails to give him the whole truth. She is now a woman in need so she presents herself to him as a supplicant.

Shakespeare uses this scene to address Margaret's flexibility. He shows her as a woman who is not afraid to be vulnerable—a traditional female trait. But Shakespeare takes this a step further and inverts the scene so that not only does Margaret gain King Lewis' support, but Warwick shifts his allegiance to her side as well. Once again in control, Margaret returns to England to confront King Edward for the battle of the throne.

Before she leaves King Lewis' palace, however, she also exerts her power over her son by promising him in marriage to Warwick's eldest daughter. Even as Prince Edward stands beside her when Warwick makes the offer, Margaret tells her son to "give thy hand to Warwick" (3H6 III.iii. 246) to seal her commitment in the matter.
Margaret does not appear again until the scene of preparation for the Tewksbury battle. The scene opens with her in power—giving her troops a pep-talk before she leads them into battle. With her son by her side, she addresses her troops about the ruthless men they will encounter in their battle. Prince Edward proclaims his admiration for his mother in his statement:

Methinks a woman of this valiant spirit
Should, if a coward heard her speak these words,
Infuse his breast with magnanimity,
And make him, naked, foil a man at arms. (V.iv. 39-42)

Obvious pride sparks between mother and son. When Prince Edward stands up to King Edward and Richard, Margaret nearly glows with pride as she compares him to his weak father: “Ah, that thy father had been so resolved” (V.v. 22).

At this point, Richard, Prince Edward, Margaret, and King Edward exchange words. Each side tries to insult the other with increasingly greater insults. Then, as Prince Edward proclaims: “I am your better, traitors as ye are; / And thou usurp'st my father's right and mine” (V.v. 36-37). Enraged at Prince Edward’s words, King Edward, followed by Clarence, stabs him.

Margaret’s army has been defeated and now she has witnessed the murder of her only child. Begging for death herself, she pleads for the Prince's murderers to “kill me too!” (V.v. 41). Instead, Richard dashes off to the tower where Henry is imprisoned to kill him too.

Upon the death of her son, Margaret descends into powerlessness again. With Suffolk dead and her son dead in her arms, she decries the cruelty of York’s sons’ actions:

Butchers and villains! bloody cannibals!
How sweet a plant have you untimely cropped!
You have no children, butchers! If you had,
The thought of them would have stirred up remorse:
But if you ever chance to have a child,
Look in his youth to have him so cut off
As, deathsmen, you have rid this sweet young prince! (V.6.1-67)

But Margaret once again asserts her power as she curses her wish that their sons too would die in their youths. Lisa Jardine states that: “In the man’s world of the history play, the only power the woman can wield is her power to dismay through verbal abuse” (118). I, however, disagree with this statement. Although Margaret is cursing at this point in the play, she has also used her womanly manipulation countless other times to succeed in her plans. It is only in times of significant loss that she lashes out with curses and such anguish.

This is the scene in the play that best illustrates the paradox of Margaret’s motherhood. Jameson describes this point in Margaret’s life:

She witnesses the final defeat of her army, the massacre of her adherents, and the murder of her son; and though the savage Richard would willingly have put an end to her misery, and exclaims very pertinently—

“Why should she live to fill the world with words?” she is dragged forth unharmed, a woeful spectacle of extremest wretchedness, to which death would have been an undeserved relief. (257)

She wishes for her own death at the loss of her son. When York’s Rutland was killed, however, she, as a mother and a woman, showed no compassion whatsoever for York and his loss. Instead, she used his loss to further her gain—to add to her power platform and further strengthen her command over him. Now, when she begs for compassion from King Edward and Clarence, they show her none. Instead of killing her to end the pain of her loss, they do nothing more than send her away to face the additional loss of Henry as well.
In the last play of the tetralogy, Richard III, Margaret has a small role, but one in which her plot for revenge against Henry and Prince Edward's deaths remains in the forefront of her thoughts. Viciousness once again shows as Margaret's true nature. Just as when she taunted York with the blood-stained napkin of his son Rutland, she wishes upon Richard her curse:

Long mayst thou live to wail thy children's death
And see another, as I see thee now,
Decked in thy rights as thou art stalled in mine! (R3 liii. 203-205)

She is still struggling over the loss of her son and the power she had over Henry. Now, realizing that she has no power over Richard, she curses him by wishing him the death of his children and that he would see another in power over the kingdom.

Queen Elizabeth is now filling what was Margaret's role. Margaret views Elizabeth as the ultimate threat. Men she was able to deal with, but another of her gender left her without her usual approaches. Dash describes their relationship:

When, near the close of this tetralogy, Margaret, the deposed, widowed Queen turns to her alter ego, Elizabeth, and mocks, "Vain flourish of my fortune.... A queen in jest, only to fill the scene" (Richard III IV.iv. 82, 91), the elder woman has begun to achieve self-knowledge. The ambiguous and uncertain limits of her own power have taught her the condition of women. For she has, at moments, reached the zenith of power, but she stands now powerless. (155)

I suggest, however, that Margaret is not totally powerless. She becomes a prophetress as all of her prophecies eventually come to pass. She remains, as Queen Elizabeth states, "well skilled in curses." Elizabeth invites her to stay so that she could "teach me how to curse mine enemies" (R3 IV.iv. 116-17).

The power of motherhood brings to the forefront the last curse of Queen Margaret in the Henry VI, Richard III plays. She has used her womanly wiles to gain power. The practice of re-
venge and power working together to elevate Margaret into the ranks of a leader is defeated by gender issues. Dash describes Margaret: “she links the works … provides continuity, and allows one to observe how women must contend with the power structure in a patriarchy” (156). Despite her accomplishments, Margaret’s attempt to gain political sovereignty was doomed simply because she was a female.

Margaret holds the skill of the Machiavellian thought processes. The Machiavellian approaches to gaining her power are successful until the emotions of motherhood became primary with avenging the misdeeds done to her son. Merely cursing her enemies is not always enough. Destroying them so they are not longer a threat is Margaret’s forte.

VII. Motherhood, Machiavellianism, and Tamora

The importance of motherhood to Tamora is revealed quickly in the play. Her first speech involves begging for her son’s life. She responds as a mother on a human level to Titus’s sentencing her eldest son to death:

Stay, Roman brethren! Gracious conqueror,  
Victorious Titus, rue the tears I shed,  
A mother’s tears in passion for her son:  
And if thy sons were ever dear to thee,  
O, think my son to be as dear to me….  
Thrice-noble Titus, spare my first-born son. (l.i.104-8, 120)

Shakespeare puts Tamora in a traditional motherhood role concerning her sons. Like Margaret, however, he also uses inversion to place her in the mothering role of her soon-to-be husband, Saturninus. Stating she will be “a mother to his youth” (l.ii.333), Tamora, like Margaret, will look to another for her womanly needs—and other needs as well.
Tamora is another of Shakespeare’s female characters who is assisted in her revenge plot by her lover. Dusinberre states:

In some ways the Elizabethan tragedy of adultery is the woman’s version of the revenge tragedy. Adultery is a woman’s only weapon of vengeance, not only for the particular wrongs of a husband, but for the helplessness of women in a world where action is strength. (303)

Also, the woman can insult her husband by giving away his “property and honor” (i.e., her body) thus, even greater insult than having her taken involuntarily. Dusinberre also states that: “The violent woman in Shakespeare’s theater is nearly always an adulteress” (301-2). Berggren concurs with this thought by stating: “Even the complex women of the major tragic phase suffer from an excess of libidinal energies that neither marriage nor motherhood can channel” (24). Tamora’s energies are even greater than Berggren discusses. She has a dual excess of energy in that she must avenge her son’s murder, yet the other, libidinal energies catch up with her when she bears Aaron’s son later in the play.

When Tamora and Aaron are caught in the woods by Bassianus and Lavinia, the opportunity for Tamora to begin her revenge on Titus presents itself. Aaron leaves to get her two sons and, upon his return, the first step in her plot begins. She lies to her sons about the situation and has Bassianus murdered while she keeps her hands free of the blood:

These two have ticed me hither to this place. . . .
No sooner had they told me [their] hellish tale,
But straight they told me they would bind me here
Unto the body of a dismal yew,
And leave me to this miserable death.
And then they called me a foul adulteress,
Lascivious Goth, and all the bitterest terms
That ever ear did hear to such effect.
And, had you not by wondrous fortune come,
This vengeance on me had they executed:
Revenge it, as you love your mother's life,
Or be ye not henceforth called my children. (II.iii.92, 105-115)

Interwoven in this lie is this Machiavellian principle that it is acceptable to lie to advance one's purposes. There is also a mother's manipulation and guilt—if they love their mother, they will do as she says. If they do not perform this deed, then, obviously they do not love their mother and, therefore, are not her children. Although she is revenging one son's death, she is using her other sons and her lover to do so while she maintains a clean image. Berggren suggests that Shakespearean women,

consequently manifest that depraved and nonprocreative lasciviousness that the sonnets attribute to the Dark Lady; indeed, evil in [these] women seems to grow from a sexuality so out of tune with its procreative potential that it breeds villainy rather than children. When female lechery is not actually sterile, its progeny is malignant ... the impulse to destroy passes inevitably from dissatisfied mother to dissatisfied son. (24)

Tamora's dissatisfaction stems from her life's situations: the multitudes of changes and losses over such a short timespan leaves her angry and vindictive. Her loss of power and the death of her son push her beyond the limits of forbearance. She releases some of this bottled-up frustration with her revenge on Titus' daughter and Bassianus where she succeeds in regaining some of her power.

Interestingly, Tamora's brutal revenge taken on Lavinia against Titus reveals how gender-blind she is. Strong and Swift state of Tamora's anger and quest for revenge: "She saw female victimization in the play as beginning with male bonding that encourages even a mother, Tamora, to
turn against young women as she seeks her own power” (219). The idea of one woman command-
ing her sons to rape another woman gives the audience an insight into the brutality and depth of Tamora’s hatred and desire for revenge for her own loss. Without concern for others, she lashes out with revenge in preservation of her maternal instincts: to do harm to those who have harmed her. The power she gains by manipulating Saturninus and her sons is funneled into the destruction of a sister-figure. But the hatred blinds her to rational action.

Conversely, Tamora’s command of rape may also have been one of Shakespeare’s act-ver-
sus-actual-sufferer inversions. Tamora’s act, commanding her sons to rape Lavinia as revenge against Titus killing her eldest son, could also be construed as a symbolic castration of Titus, thus giving Tamora the ultimate power over him. Combined with this act of power and illustrating even greater power is Tamora’s exhibition of the power of creation. Tamora becomes pregnant with Aaron’s child—a child of an adulterous affair—“Lavinia, who signifies the blameless victim” remains barren, which further identifies her with Titus’s figurative castration (Wynne-Davies 137).

Just as Titus ignored Tamora’s begging for her son’s life, Lavinia’s begging for murder instead of rape has no effect on Tamora. With the tables turned, Tamora feels the power of being in command. Feeling powerful, she lets the reader know her ultimate plans of revenge: “Ne’er let my heart know merry cheer indeed / Till all the Andronic be made away” (II.iii.188-89). To annihilate the entire Andronic family for the murder of her eldest son satiates her desire for vengeance. To accomplish this destruction, she enlists Aaron to assist in her plan. With his help she is able to eliminate two of Titus’s sons in payment for the life of her one son.

Similar to Margaret, Tamora enlists the help of her lover to further her own power and revenge. Margaret’s relationship with Suffolk was not as manipulative as Tamora’s with Aaron. Their relationship also bore a son, which manifested Tamora’s infidelity. Aaron plants the
"proof" needed to implicate Titus's sons in Bassianus's murder. Tamora, again working behind the scenes, uses her womanliness to achieve results.

In a move to manipulate Saturninus and woo him again after the birth of Aaron's child, and to deflect the questions of why Titus was attacking the emperor, Tamora uses her wiles on Saturninus to convince him to be soft on Titus and understand his loss to be as deep as her own:

My gracious lord, my lovely Saturnine,
Lord of my life, commander of my thoughts,
Calm thee, and bear the faults of Titus' age,
Th' effects of sorrow for his valiant sons,
Whose loss hath pierced him deep and scarred his heart,
And rather comfort his distressed plight
Than prosecute the meanest or the best
For those contempts. (IViv.27-34)

But this act is the forerunner of her final deed of Machiavellian-style revenge. As the Goths, now led by one of Titus's sons, speed toward the city to take Tamora, she tells Saturninus that she will: "enchant the old Andronicus /With words more sweet, and yet more dangerous" (IViv.89-90) to convince him to call off his son's army's attack. She further states:

If Tamora entreat him, then he will:
For I can smooth, and fill his aged ears
With golden promises, that were his heart
Almost impregnable, his old ears deaf,
Yet should both ear and heart obey my tongue. (95-99)

To accomplish this she becomes the master of irony and disguise.

Shakespeare's use of irony is obvious as he disguises Tamora and her sons as Revenge attended by Rape and Murder. Tamora appears as Revenge, for her avenging her eldest son's
murder, and her sons appear as Rape and Murder; for their part in the rape of Lavinia and murder of Bassianus. Shakespeare also uses the connection with Hell to pull together Tamora's hatred and vengeance and Titus's loss:

I am Revenge, sent from th' infernal kingdom
To ease the gnawing vulture of thy mind,
By working wreakful vengeance on thy foes. (V.ii.30-33)

By pretending he believes Tamora's and her sons' disguises, Titus quickly sees that her plot is to take vengeance on men who rape and murder. Tamora, however, believes Titus to be mad and as he agrees to "embrace" her, tells the audience of her plans:

For now he firmly takes me for Revenge,
And, being credulous in this mad thought,
I'll make him send for Lucius his son;
And, whilst I at a banket hold him sure,
I'll find some cunning practice out of hand,
To scatter and disperse the giddy Goths,
Or at least make them his enemies. (73-79)

But what actually happens is a match of wits—or another instance of who is out-foxing whom. Green describes Tamora's actions in her disguise:

when Tamora reappears as Revenge, she reminds us not only that her own unforgiving will, so cruel in the scene with Lavinia, has made her the very essence of evil, but also that she has had as much cause for vengeance as has Titus. (321)

Shakespeare's inversion of male revenge and power with the motherhood and female revenge give a new twist on the old idea of masculine warring factions. Here, Tamora has declared war on Titus and his sons. Her motherhood has been dealt a destructive blow and now she seeks to rape Titus of his role as father in retribution. But Tamora fails to succeed in
the Machiavellian persona of the lion or the fox. Titus succeeds in manipulating Tamora’s sons so that he is able to murder them in revenge for Lavinia’s rape and mutilation.

Titus succeeds in convincing Tamora to dine with him at a ceremonious feast. But he is planning the ultimate in revenge for Tamora by killing her remaining sons and using their blood and bones in the food she will eat. Adelman describes Tamora’s power over her sons and how their flesh is hers:

For that flesh was hers to begin with: as with Shakespeare’s other mothers’ sons—the rapists Charon [sic] and Demetrius . . . his violent sexuality is construed as derivative from the woman’s part, an extension of her will in him. (216)

This power has become her downfall. Stimpson describes the cannibalistic act: “when she incorporates them [the children] back into her body it is an inversion of the release of a living child that marks natural maternity” (60). Tamora’s release of her sons has become Titus’ revenge. Her final revenge goes unaccomplished; she is killed before she is able to kill Titus’ son.

VIII. Conclusion

Both Margaret and Tamora fall from their states of power in the end. By successful manipulation through both Machiavellian techniques and the use of their womanly wiles, they elevate themselves into, yet are unable to maintain, power positions. Their Machiavellian quests for power and plots for revenge are further inflamed as the motherhood factor becomes primary. No longer is the covert approach of ultimate importance to them. As their families are wounded so, too, are their logic and judgment. The schemes of revenge for wrongs done to them or their families prove to be their downfall. Their quest for power is but a battle in the overall war of gender differences. They win their battles temporarily but the loss of family and their obsessions for revenge cause their overall loss of the war.
Linda Bamber describes Margaret as being "presented as a woman who has betrayed her own gender" (140). Little can betray a woman more than encouraging her son to rape another woman as Tamora does. Margaret and Tamora both exhibit betrayal of their gender and brutalize other women in their quest for power.

Shakespeare had an innate skill in his depiction of women as power seekers. But with these two women, he complicated matters by adding their motherhood as a factor in their quests. While adhering to the social mores, Shakespeare is able to write about women who, in their quest for power, discover that motherhood is just as strong a motivator for actions. When their children are hurt, the maternal instinct take over and rational acts fall by the wayside. Power as the ultimate motivator also plays an important part in their success or failure at revenge.

Rackin suggests that Shakespeare was a modernist in that he wrote with a Machiavellian view which demonstrated his interest in "change, mobility, and individual initiative" (43). I posit that Shakespeare had an uncanny awareness of the social and political situation of his time. By holding this progressive perspective, he gave his audience the opportunity to see what could happen if current social norms were not allowed to continue their natural advancement. By placing the burden of the Machiavellian nature on the women—the mothers—he gave his audience a taste for moving away from traditional patriarchal cultural norms.
Notes

1See Thomas Andrawe, The Unmasking of a Feminine Machiavelli, 1604. Although it does not pertain to Shakespeare's characters, it, too, is an inversion of the traditional female role. Andrawe's writes about Lady Fortune and how she can be for or against you at any one time. When she is with you, all is good, but when she is against you, she is like the traditional Machiavel.


4For descriptions of how characters fit the Machiavellian persona, see Edward Meyer, Machiavelli and the Elizabethan Drama (Weimar: Verlag von Emil Felber, 1897).

5See Mario Praz, The Flaming Heart: Essays on Crashaw, Machiavelli, and Other Studies in the Relations between Italian and English Literature from Chaucer to T. S. Eliot (Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1966).


7Interestingly, Shakespeare mentions nothing of Henry's mother, Catherine de Valois.


