

**RESEARCH ARTICLE**

***MORTIMER THE JUNIOR AS A MACHIAVELLIAN  
CHARACTER IN MARLOWE'S EDWARD II***

Fatima Zohra KHELIFI<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> University of Jordan  
Department of English language and literature  
Supervised by Professor: Dr. Hussein HAWAMDEH

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**Abstract**

This paper attempts to explore and examine Mortimer the junior in Christopher Marlowe's *Edward II* as a Machiavellian character. this study at first represent in brief the author and his main concerns, then it gives an initial representation and introduction to the play, next it emphasis on the analytical section that concern with the character of Mortimer as Machiavellian villain in the light of Machiavellianism as it was understood in the Elizabethan period and associated with villainy and evil. Thus, the central focus of this extended research paper is to examine to what extent Mortimer is a Machiavellian character connecting it to Machiavellian discourse.

**Key Words:** Edward II- Christopher Marlowe- Mortimer the junior-Machiavellian-Machiavellianism

Christopher Marlowe was one of the most significant and major figure of the Renaissance. He was the “Elizabethan poet, playwright, and translator; he was baptized on February 26, 1564 in Canterbury, England. There is little to be known about his childhood and his early education. At age fifteen he enrolled as a scholar at the King’s School, Canterbury. Then, he went on to Cambridge University’s Corpus Christi College, where he graduated with a BA degree in 1584. He remained in Cambridge until 1587, writing and pursuing his studies (*Christopher Marlowe*). Marlowe was known not only as a notorious blasphemer as well as England's most noteworthy playwright. As a poet he was known by his poetry *Hero and Leander*. in drama he was famous by his play *Dido, Queen of Carthage*; his spectacularly violent two-part epic *Tamburlaine*, about the revolution and emergence of a Scythian shepherd to become lord of a large part of the world, had altered the Elizabethan theater; his cynical comedy and *the Famous Tragedy of the Rich Jew of Malta* had engaged ‘mass audiences by ruthlessly mocking conventional moral pieties’; his challenging history play *Edward II* had offered an unpredictable, complex, sympathetic portrayal of a homosexual king. What's more, the energetic force of his disaster *Doctor Faustus* surpassed and ‘exceeded anything that his rival and exact contemporary, William Shakespeare, had yet written’ (Greenblatt).

Some contemporary moralists seized on the story with an unholy glee; in 1597, for example, Thomas Beard recognized in it “a manifest sign of Gods judgement ... in that he compelled his own hand which had written those blasphemies to be the instrument to punish him, and that in his brain, which had devised the same”. Thomas Nashe described Marlowe as “a diviner Muse” than Musaeus; George Peele called him “the Muses’ darling”; and Michael Drayton observed in him “those brave translunary things that the first poets had.” (*Christopher Marlowe* 2020) It has been noted that “Marlowe had a reputation for violence, and much remains unknown about his government service and his political and religious beliefs. There is some evidence that he served as a spy for Sir Francis Walsingham’s intelligence service. On May 18, 1593, the Privy Council issued a warrant for his arrest, but on May 30, he was stabbed by Ingram Drizer in a Deptford lodging house, allegedly during a dispute over a bill. He was twenty-nine”. (*Christopher Marlowe*)

The exact date of *Edward II* has not been determined, however, it is generally and conceivably assigned to 1590-91. The historical basis for the plot Marlowe found in the Chronicles of Fabyan, Stow, and Holinshed, particularly the last. In its treatment of the realities of history, this play is a run of the mill case of the class of show known as the "chronicle history," which thrived over the most recent two decades of the sixteenth century, and finished in Shakespeare's "Henry IV" and "Henry V." While the order of events in history determines for the most part, generally, the progression of scenes, the playwright consolidates, excludes, explains, elaborates , and re-orchestrates so as to in order to gain dramatic effectiveness and to draw out the character of Edward and the result of his shortcoming. hence, the action covers a recorded time of some twenty-two years, however no such

stretch of time is recommended by the play; the military tasks in Ireland and Scotland, and particularly the battle of Bannockburn, are predated so as to interface them with Gaveston, who was, in fact, dead before any of them happened; and the adherence of Spencer to the King is made to follow immediately, instead of several years, after the death of the earlier favourite. However, with this opportunity in the treatment of subtleties, Marlowe prevails with regards to giving a significantly obvious, just as an intensely influencing, image of the character and destiny of Edward II. The play is the ripest and generally skilful of Marlowe's creations, appearing in the outline of the character, the development of the plot, and the opportunity and assortment of the section, a striking development over his previous work. (W.Eliot)

More specifically, in his *Edward II*, Marlowe entered upon a new field (Boas 52). He moved from Turning aside from the fortunes of foreign and semi-legendary person- ages like Tamburlaine, Faustus, and Barabas, he went for his materials to the national history of his own country, and selected for dramatic treatment the tragically career of Edward II. (ibid) Furthering, Edward II appears to provide a much wider, much increasingly perplexing, and, in specific regards and the more, it offers a “philosophically unsettling statement of power”.

Edward II is the main character of this play, but he is not himself a Machiavellian, nor does he get enchanted by the Machiavellian desire for power that characterized other Marlovian names especially Barabas and Tamburlaine the Great. King Edward II dismisses the political practice just as the demeanour to control such a great amount of embraced by the Machiavellian talk. Be that as it may, he becomes of the egocentric goal and devilish plans directed by his companions just as his foes whose political aspirations have a solid hypothetical connection to the Machiavellian art and discourse. more specifically, it's Mortimer the junior who is portrays as a Machiavellian villain from the very beginning to the end of the play. Thus, the central focus of this extended research paper is to examine to what extent Mortimer is a Machiavellian character connecting it to Machiavellian discourse.

Concerning Machiavellianism, Marlowe is the first author and dramatist who introduce Machiavelli and Machiavellianism onto the stage his *The Jew of Malta 1588* (Meyer30). In addition, It seems crucial to note that most writers and playwrights of the Elizabethan period associate Machiavellian aspects negatively with evil, as Edward Meyer explains in his *Machiavelli and Elizabethan Drama (1897)* that “Machiavelli appeared as the very devil incarnate, or, at least, as the incorporation of all hypocrisy” (1), as he argues that “tantamount significance for the drama was the fact that Machiavelli had been brought on the stage as the incarnation of villainy (37).

Interestingly, in Christopher Marlowe's, *Edward II*, Young Mortimer is portrayed as the second significant character after King Edward II. He is depicted with great pride and power: “Mortimer, who is portrayed with great Spirit and power. It has been too little noticed that Mortimer

is remarkably akin to Marlowe's earlier heroes, especially Tamburlaine. The lines of his character are of course, toned down to suit the altered environment, but there is the same note of lawlessly aspiring ambition". (Boas 54) Mortimer is portrayed "as cloaking his villainy under religious hypocrisy" (Meyer 55) especially when he manifests to get the sympathy of barons in his speech in act V scene IV, to overthrow and execute King Edward from throne: "*The king must die, or Mortimer goes down*".

Moreover, Warshaw, J. in his review "*Machiavelli in Marlowe*" argues that Marlowe is like all the Elizabethan dramatists, knew Machiavelli cursorily and only superficially. He had understood him, or rather, ambiguous adaptations of him, but had never tested his internal significance (433). He adds that "Machiavelli's restricted application of psychology and politics was expelled by Marlowe from its lawful sphere, where, though amazing, it did not seem sardonic, and adjusted to the illimitable range of private life, where it appeared not only villainous, but even subversive of the most sacred social bonds". (ibid) Accordingly, Edward Meyer asserts:

The most colossal figures to be met with in the Elizabethan drama, are Marlowe's Tamburlaine, Faustus, and Barabas : into these Titans he breathed the very soul of his existence, a wild craving for infinite power. He was the ' notable exception 'among the Elizabethan dramatists; for he had studied Machiavelli with a vengeance (33)

Hence, Christopher Marlowe's *Edward II* is noteworthy endeavours to utilize the Machiavellian art in a fitting situation. Indeed, Mortimer junior has the attributes of a successful leader. But as consistently on account of any human character built by Marlowe the 'Will to Power', the exceptional, personal, arrogant pride of the man baffles his commendable ambitions as a ruler. Additionally, Mortimer was too much of an Englishman to work out a Machiavellian plan in the entirety of its consistent subtleties. Customs, moral shows, a specific ineradicable idealism, a kind of coercion to what may be called his "better nature," an evidently indestructible 'belief in the ultimate honour of man', and an obstinate rigidity of will, A poor substitute for Machiavellian smoothness of thought and activity, Negate his honest goals. He suspects Kent, yet doesn't expel him from this sordid world. He ought to have divined the emotions and the plausible direct of the young Prince, yet smugly he expects to be the power behind the throne (ibid 436):

The prince I rule, the queen I do command,  
And with a lowly cong? to the ground,  
The proudest lords salute me as I pass :  
I seal, I cancel, I do what I will :  
Feared am I more than loved? let me be feared ;

And when I frown, make all the court look pal?.

I view the prince with Aristarchus' eyes,  
Whose looks were as a breeching to a boy.

And to conclude, I am Protector now.

Now is all sure, the queen and Mortimer  
Shall rule the realm, the king ; and none rules us.

Mine enemies will I plague, my friends advance ;

And what I list command who dare control ? " (V-IV-48-72)

These lines in act the fifth, scene four are highlighting 'Machiavellian notions'. Indeed, these particular lines denote how Mortimer's evolution as a dramatic character in one more compelling instance of self-destroying mania for power. at the heights of his ambitious rise to eminence, he is given a soliloquy that sounds for all the world like Richard III" (Deats and Logan 218) and Tamburlaine in his speech: *As for myself, I stand as Jove's huge tree,/ And others are but shrubs compar'd to me./ All tremble at my name, and I fear none* (V.vi. 11-14) In other words, "Mortimer lacked was psychological insight. His courage, proved a dozen times, his clever stirring up of rebellion for the purpose of rid ding the court of Gaveston, the king's favourite", his plan to keep Gaveston in England, where he could be more easily assassinated, his repeal of Gaveston's exile, for which the king rewards him by appointing him Lord Marshall, his orders to Gurney to stress the king to death instead of to killing him, his choice to stop the ruler's life on the grounds that the people are starting to feel sorry for him outright, his brief homicide of Lightborn after the latter has killed the King; "are all signs of an accomplished politician, but not necessarily of a statesman". (Warshaw 437)

Nevertheless, For sure he has been fruitful in exceeding his fortune by changing the influence relations he is in. His prosperity against the flunky debilitated ruler, later on, is a show of the most of a hero "*who now makes Fortune's wheel turn as he please*". His control of Fortune here reveals his Machiavellian subjectivity and suggests at his virtue, so run of the mill of a Machiavellian ruler. Be that as it may, when Mortimer is effective in satisfying his aspiration, the other essence of his character comes out. He crushes, deposes, and detains Edward II. Edward II's significant other, Isabella turns into a partner to his plan. He makes Edward II's juvenile child Edward III the lord of England and turns into his Protector. The band of Edward II's partners, for example, Gaveston is either slaughtered or made inadequate. So as to make sure about himself totally, he has imagined the homicide of the powerless, detained Edward II. Here he has used the intensity of language. Along

these lines, he turns into a savage tyrant of England who, for his own capacity and security, leaves his prior motto of enthusiasm and gets lowered in absolutist imperialism. His hang on the English political circumstance is presently supreme.

Therefore, Marlowe's Edward II, shows the influence of Machiavellian villainy on the character of Young Mortimer who uses Lightborn to murder the king. Lightborn himself associates with a great Machiavellian mind, and he has more ways of assassinating than Barabas as he declares in his speech to Young Mortimer in Act V, scene IV:

"I learn'd in Naples how to poison flowers;  
 To strangle with a lawn thrust down the throat;  
 To pierce the wind-pipe with a needle's point;  
 Or, whilst one is asleep, to take a quill,  
 And blow a little powder in his ears;  
 Or, open his mouth, and pour quick-silver down.  
 But yet I have a braver way than these."

Marlowe's concern with the character of Mortimer the junior does not end in permitting a kind of authenticity to that thought of sovereign subjectivity. He rather reveals the false notion in that thought. Mortimer, who, on one phase, flaunts that he really has overreached the constraint of intensity and the limit of power that his social position has recorded him into and that he appears to direct the course of history at his own will, is oppressed at long last to a 'bitter realization' of the imprudence of such vainglorious presumption and awful treatment. His enemy begins functioning when the news on Edward II's homicide arrives at the ears of his son Edward III, now the king of England. The immature king understands that his "*father's murder through thy treachery*" (V.vi.28). However, he does not spare a moment or fear to take appropriate measure against him. . He without a moment's delay sentences him to death.

To sum, to have reached his goals, he should have made allowance for the affection of the English for their king; he ought to have offered leeway for the love of the English for their ruler; he ought to have set the noblemen in opposition to each other; he ought to have debased the Prince and made him a prepared instrument or developed his companionship in an apparently true way through the mother; he ought to have discarded the King in some extremely unpretentious, quick style, rather than letting him wait in prison, an object of everyday compassion and sympathy. However, the entire issue with Mortimer as a Machiavellian is that he moved a consummately decent Italian arrangement



to England without making those racial and fickle changes requested by the particular conditions encompassing him.

In short, from the previous analysis, this study reveals and realizes that Marlowe's character of Mortimer the junior mainly and other minor character like Lightborn are placed and associated with Machiavelli's discourse and represent Machiavellian villain to obtain power with ill manners.

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