

# Shakespeare's compliments to king james in macbeth

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The play “ Macbeth”, was written in 1606 by William Shakespeare in the reign of King James the first. It was used as a piece of political propaganda made to please the King, who was a patron of Shakespeare's acting company.

Shakespeare had written many plays under this King's reign, however “ Macbeth” most clearly reflects the playwright's relationship with the sovereign.

With “ Macbeth”, Shakespeare paid homage to his King's Scottish lineage; the witches' prophecy that Banquo will found a line of Kings is a clear nod to the claim that James' family has descended from the historical Thane of Lochaber.

Shakespeare already presents gender expectations in this tragedy with Lady Macbeth, who represents the corrupting force of ambition and the downfall of people who choose a path of power when it is not naturally theirs to take.

Shakespeare wrote ‘ Macbeth’ to spread the message that shall you step out of your respected perimeter in society, there will be consequences and punishments, such as madness, which is what Lady Macbeth experiences in Act 5, Scene 1.

Firstly, the name ‘ Lady Macbeth’ suggests how she is a property of her husband as she does not have an identity. It represents a patriarchal society where women were considered objects and were meant to comply with the demands of their spouse.

Shakespeare explores gender roles by creating contrasting characters, such as Lady Macbeth, which portrays a dominant woman who subverts her gender role and expectations in her relationship with her husband. Mirroring is used to contrast this character with Lady Macduff, who is an exemplary and traditional Christian woman of the Jacobean era to reinforce how deviant and antithetical Lady Macbeth is.

In Act 1 Scene 5, Lady Macbeth is afraid that her husband does not have what it takes to kill for the crown: " Yet I do fear thy nature, it is too full o' th' milk of human kindness to catch the nearest way." In this phrase, Lady Macbeth doubts her husband's masculinity by assuming that he would not have the mental capability to commit a regicide for his own benefit.

This is an important part in Lady Macbeth's first soliloquy as it eclipses her graciousness as a woman to a more dark and merciless nature, which is one of the key themes in Macbeth: " Fair is foul, and foul is fair.", meaning that appearances can be deceiving.

" Milk of human kindness" connotes compassion, benevolence and the care for others, which presents us with the fact that Macbeth contradicts his wife's character in terms of power. This scene is a significant part of the play as Shakespeare wished to accentuate the fact that although society at the time expected women to be loyal and submissive to their husbands, Lady Macbeth subverted this idea by challenging Macbeth.

Lady Macduff, however, is the antithesis of Lady Macbeth, being a model and honourable woman and wife of the Medieval Age; she takes care of her

children and is an avid follower of religion. In Act 4, Scene 2, Lady Macduff states:

“ Sirrah, your father’s dead. And what will you do now? How will you live?”

This phrase clearly demonstrates the expectations of women in both the Jacobean era and Medieval age as the audience can depict from this line that Lady Macduff was highly dependant on her husband, which were one of the gender expectations at the time; men would work and provide for the family while the women and girls of the family stayed at home and were taught how to cook and clean.

The words “ what” and “ how” create a semantic field of fear, unsureness, and confusion. Adding to that, this phrase creates a sense of vulnerability towards Lady Macduff as she is no longer “ protected” by her husband.

To summarise, Lady Macduff was created to give the audience a sense of how Lady Macbeth should have behaved and what was expected of her being noble, as opposed to the way she did in reality.

Moreover, the disruption of gender roles is presented throughout Act 1, Scene 5, where Lady Macbeth wishes to be stripped away of her femininity to gain the courage of killing King Duncan:

“ Come, you spirits that tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here, and fill me from the crown to the toe top-full of direst cruelty.” In this scene, Lady Macbeth is calling upon the dark arts and ordering them to make her a barbarous, brutal being.

"Come", being in the imperative tense, brings out Lady Macbeth's authoritative nature. Lady Macbeth is "luring" demons into her room and ordering them to change her. This forebodes the moment when Lady Macbeth convinces her husband to kill the king, as her persuasive skills were unveiled to the audience.

Provoking the public, the line "unsex me here" displays an authoritative and powerful character. In the Jacobean era, calling upon the devil and the dark arts was extremely frowned upon as people were very superstitious; Lady Macbeth was not only challenging gender roles, she was also challenging religious beliefs, therefore the audience and Shakespeare himself were associating her with witchcraft.

It is at this moment that the public realises Lady Macbeth's conflicted behaviour, and that her determination to be crowned queen by all means necessary is displayed.

To conclude, Act 1, Scene 5 is a prominent part of the play as Shakespeare accentuated Lady Macbeth's dominant and dark personality to represent sin and witchcraft. He did that by using iambic pentameter, especially in the first part of Lady Macbeth's soliloquy:

Shakespeare wanted to shock his medieval audience by creating a controversial female character that manipulated her husband. Lady Macbeth's malicious behaviour opposed one that would have been exemplary during the Jacobean age. One would've been appalled watching "Macbeth" as it was considered a sin to call upon the dark arts.

Moreover, kings were considered as God's representatives on Earth and Shakespeare creates a powerful and ambitious character to use as a piece of political propaganda -