

How the theme of kinship is dealt with in macbeth

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Shakespeare's tragedy *Macbeth* contains an elaborate exposition of the theme of kingship. The main character's evil plan aims at overthrowing the current ruler and assuming power over Scotland. Based on this the playwright profoundly analyses which qualities are the most important in a king and the divine right of kings. Before carrying out his plot Macbeth weighed up all the reasons why he wanted to proceed with it and all the arguments against his terrible murder plan. One such argument is that "this Duncan has been so clear in his great office. Duncan is portrayed as a wise ruler who feels strongly about the security of his country in the ongoing war with Norway. However, our encounter with this noble man is very brief. Macbeth, once he became king, did not know how to rule a country. His major concerns are for his own safety and for the security of his own power. He doesn't even consider the welfare of the Scottish people before going ahead with the regicide. This shows that no matter how dedicated you are to your country, even as a great warrior and "Bellona's bridegroom" - as an ordinary person you may not rule a country.

This message is reflective of the prevailing belief in the divine right of kings that existed in Shakespeare's day. Macbeth is not fit for the task: with his Scotland is "bleeding." The tyranny is reflected by the weather and bizarre supernatural events (pathetic fallacy). The playwright's use of language in *Macbeth* is probably the brightest example of his ability to develop striking images. The enormous amount of heart-stopping gruesome references to blood and violence emphasise the consequences of the inadequate regime for which Macbeth is responsible.

However, the Bard of Avon not only condemns the bad ruler but he explores the good qualities that a king should possess. Desperate and helpless, Macduff arrives in England to see Malcolm, the legitimate successor to Duncan's throne. Malcolm is almost an embodiment of all the positive qualities of kings. He, along with his brother, immediately decide to rely on themselves to preserve their dynasty by leaving Scotland despite the obvious and inevitable suspicion that it raises and their own bereavement. They handle the situation with wisdom and courage, all for the sake of their kingdom.

When Malcolm meets Macduff we see more of his wisdom. He adopts the personality of a man who is "not fit to govern and not even to live." Malcolm makes sure to not jeopardise his own life and the welfare of Scotland by "testing" Macduff. Malcolm, unlike Macbeth, is able to tell appearance from reality in his superiority as king. The main aspects highlighted by Malcolm that are absolutely incompatible with a decent king are lying, voluptuousness and greed. He plans to "cut the nobles of their land, desire his jewels and this other's house... our wives, your daughters, your matrons and your maids may not fulfil the cistern of my lust." Satisfied with Macduff's reaction Malcolm opens up: "All I am is thine and mine country to command" and admits that he is not ridden with vices as he pretended. We find out Shakespeare's vision of king-becoming graces: "Justice, Verity, Temp'rance, Stableness, Bounty, Perseverance, Mercy, Lowliness, Devotion, Patience, Courage, Fortitude" The return of the rightful king is marked by the delight of the army. Nature reacts positively when Malcolm returns.

Macbeth, on the contrary, is full of bravado and feels invincible one minute and then left thinking about "all our yesterdays have lighted fools the way to dusty death... a poor player that struts and frets his hours upon the stage" as Scotland, Lady Macbeth and his soul are all deteriorating around him. In conclusion, the theme of kingship is well developed in the play, with illustrations of the difference between a noble king and a noble man turned incompetent tyrant and the principles behind kingship.