

Authorship of shakespeare's macbeth essay



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Much speculation has been made about the authorship of Shakespeare's plays. Some scholars argue that parts of his plays were written by other playwrights, some argue that he did not write any of his plays, while others believe that he did not exist at all. One passage in particular that raises a few questions is Act III, Scene V, in Shakespeare's Macbeth, where the three witches meet Hecate. It is believed by some, including myself that this portion of the play was not written by Shakespeare, but instead by Thomas Middleton.

To begin, Shakespeare is common for writing in blank verse or prose. Blank verse was often used by noble characters and contained a rhyme pattern known as iambic pentameter, which is an unaccented syllable followed by an accented syllable, repeated five times to create a line. Therefore, a blank verse is simply an unrhymed iambic pentameter. Prose was often used by servants or members of the lower classes and contains no pattern of accentual rhythm. Now the unusual thing about Act III, scene V, is that Hecate speaks in neither of these poetic styles, but instead speaks in iambic tetrameter with rhyming couplets, which is an unaccented syllable followed by an accented syllable and then repeated four times to create a line.

An example of iambic tetrameter is in Hecate's monologue when she says "your vessels and your spells provide", the red refers to the accented syllable whereas the blue refers to the unaccented syllable. Now, rhyming was usually only ever used near the end of a scene to signal the completion of action and to emphasize the final words spoken by a character on stage.

Rhyming couplets provide a striking difference in comparison to Shakespeare's famous iambic pentameter, and shows how unlikely it is or

Shakespeare to have written this scene because most characters spoke in unrhymed iambic pentameter for monologues and speeches, whereas Hecate did. On top of different rhythmic patterns, a new character is introduced in Act III, Scene V. The character, Hecate, would be considered the head witch or witch supervisor and she shows up to scold the three witches for excluding her from their meetings with Macbeth. Hecate's accusatory tone shows her superiority over the other witches. And I, the mistress of your charms, / The close contriver of all harms, / as never called to bear my part, / or show the glory of our art? " Hecate's speech in this scene creates an opportunity for foreshadowing how the "instruments of darkness" will destroy him by filling him with overconfidence, but she does have a point when she says that "security/ Is mortals' chiefest enemy" meaning that overconfidence is man's worst enemy. Though this speech does foreshadow the plan of how Macbeth will die in the end, we already knew that from the beginning.

This play is a tragedy, which by definition means that a bunch of tragic events result in an unhappy ending concerning the downfall of the main character, usually due to a flaw in character or conflict with some overpowering force. In Macbeth, the tragic events are that Macbeth kills a bunch of people to get the crown and protect himself from losing the crown which results in a battle where Macbeth ends up dead because of his overconfidence and greed. Even though foreshadowing is found in this scene, it did not write this scene. However, Hecate is where Thomas Middleton enters the picture.

In the ending of Act III, Scene V, there is a stage direction stating that music and a song is being played from behind the stage and includes only the first words of each of the songs: "Come away, come away," and "Black spirits." Each of these songs is found in the only other play of that period to feature a witch named Hecate: Thomas Middleton's *The Witch*. The thought by many scholars is that while Thomas Middleton was working for the Kings Men at the time, that he was asked to improve the Shakespeare's *Macbeth* by adding in new scenes and dialogue featuring Hecate, the character from *The Witch*. However, if Middleton was the man to write Act III, Scene V, it wouldn't have been until later after the play had been completely written, therefore saying that Thomas Middleton revised Shakespeare's *Macbeth* by trying to add his songs and character, Hecate from *The Witch*. In conclusion, I think that though Shakespeare composed most of *Macbeth*, he did not write Act III, Scene V due to the change in poetic rhythm, continuous rhyming couplets, a lack of plot development, and due to the fact that there are clues leading you to Thomas Middleton's *The Witch*.

Though I believe that Thomas Middleton wrote Act III, Scene V, it is still considered Shakespeare's *Macbeth*.