

In Act 1 scene 2, on the battlefield, Macbeth is portrayed as valiant, ruthless and aggressive (all the qualities expected of a man).

→ this display of masculinity is rewarded as we see Macbeth is made Thane of Cawdor

however, there is debate whether this is because of his brave efforts or because of the fate made the witches' predicted in Act 1 st.

Lady Macbeth fears that Macbeth is "too full of the milk of human kindness" Act 1 scene 5 → milk is a symbol of nature and later we see Lady Macbeth's stinging she asks "come to my woman's breasts and take my milk for gau."

Lady Macbeth's womanhood impedes her from performing acts of violence and cruelty, which she associates with manliness.

Act 5 scene 5 - "She should have died hereafter" → not emotive at all!

Macbeth's reaction to his wife's death is very masculine and logical → big contrast to rest of play where he acts as an unworld coward

End - very feminine in the sense of wishing to regain from combat and he breaks Act 5 scene 8 "I will not fight thee"

Lady Macbeth challenges her husband's manhood - leading him to question and examine what it is to be a man

Beginning - Macbeth defends his manhood by essentially agreeing to carry out his wife's will - Act 1 scene 7 "I dare, more is done" "that may become a man... who dares to do more is none"

Lady Macbeth subverts the expectation of what it is to be a woman; she rejects her womanhood and bargains with darkness

meaning that he dares to do all that is good for a man to do, and says that any man that does more than this is not really a man at all → later he succumbs to ambition and does this very thing by killing Duncan.

Lady Macbeth desires to relinquish all feminine qualities of her character to be more forceful and masculine.

important scene = Act 1 scene 5 "unsex me here" "dare - cruelty" "stop up the access and passage to remorse"

she realises she is limited by her gender.

Lady Macbeth displays disturbing and aggressive language to manipulate Macbeth. She says that if her own child was dying as cowardly as Macbeth is she would "have plucked my nipple from his boneless gums and dashed the brains out" Act 1 scene 7 → contrasts with Macbeth's description of Duncan "pity, like a naked newborn baby"

Lady Macbeth uses this to spur Macbeth to prove his masculinity to her and more importantly show that she is not more of a man than he is

At this point, Macbeth and his wife have seemed to reverse roles → Macbeth is seemingly manly and protective whereas LM is being cold, ruthless and mainly.

The play opens with the witches: female characters, rather than the pious Macbeth → introduced as the only women figures within the play that can directly influence someone's fate.

As the prophecies start to come true, this only strengthens the trust in the witches' and their influence → and by the end, Macbeth turns to the witches in desperation as he has destroyed all his other relationships.

Since Macbeth is told "none of woman born shall harm Macbeth", it is assumed that a man born of woman is also born with the weaknesses of a woman

therefore weakness is directly linked to womanhood femininity and that Macbeth could never be defeated by anyone like that. Act 5 scene 8 "Macduff was from his mother's womb unnaturally ripped" → reveals that to be truly great + powerful, one must not have any ties to women, allowing him to defeat Macb.

Masculinity vs femininity: the women @ this time were not so inclined to spoon the family and main we were raising children. CONTEXTUALLY = during Shakespeare's time, the man was meant to protect and to support his family. He was the breadwinner and usually took dominating, aggressive and powerful. → the idea of a woman taking control of a household was not uncommon as England had already experienced 2 queens. → this may be why Lady Macbeth is seen as such a driving factor in his decisions.