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Power and Persuasion

The power structure in the relationship with Macbeth and Lady Macbeth involves Lady Macbeth's desire to do harm and her exploitation of Macbeth's weaknesses. She wishes to acquire the characteristics of a man, saying "Come, you spirits / That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here" (I, v, 47-48). Lady Macbeth believes that her own power is detrimentally affected by her feminine qualities. She therefore seeks to balance her power equally with Macbeth by hiding her moral thoughts and emotions from herself. Lady Macbeth tries to gain power, and attempts to influence Macbeth through coercion. Macbeth is instructed by Lady Macbeth to beguile Duncan with his heroic deeds and false face, so that he may not be suspected of murder. Both characters desire great power, and they find a balance in their desire for power. Macbeth initially objects to the proposal that he should kill Duncan when he is asleep, because he believes that the plan would fail. Lady Macbeth gains the power of coercion over Macbeth, telling him, "But screw your courage to the sticking place / And we'll not fail" (I, vii, 70-71). Lady Macbeth and Macbeth's balance of power is distinguished by Macbeth's fear, and Lady Macbeth's lack of fear. Macbeth's weakness is his fear for his continued preservation of power, asking the witches "By Sinel's death I know I am Thane of Glamis. / But how of Cawdor?" (I, iii, 74-75). He is troubled by his interpretation of the words that the three witches had spoken to him when he first encountered them. Lady Macbeth's power and influence are gained partially through Lady Macbeth's control of Macbeth's decisions. Macbeth is admired in the play, and yet he is portrayed as indifferent to his praises. Macbeth's desire for power causes him to ultimately

follow Lady Macbeth's plan to murder Duncan. Macbeth disregards his belief of honor when he decides to kill Duncan. He believes that he must honor Lady Macbeth.