

In the play *Macbeth*, Shakespeare presents ambition as a powerful but dangerous force. Ambition is shown through LM's determination. She says that Macbeth is "too full o' the milk of human kindness", which suggests that he is naturally kind and moral. The metaphor "milk" implies innocence and goodness. This shows that LM thinks ambition requires a lack of kindness and that morality is an obstacle to gaining power.

Shakespeare also presents LM as extremely ambitious and manipulative when she says she will "pour my spirits in thine ear", which suggests she intends to influence and persuade Macbeth to kill King Duncan. The verb "pour" implies force, control and dominance, as if she will fill Macbeth's mind with her own ambitious and ruthless ideas. This highlights that her ambition is stronger and more reckless than Macbeth's at this stage of the play and that she is willing to manipulate him into committing regicide.

Furthermore, she refers to the crown as the "golden round", which symbolises kingship and power. By describing it this way, Shakespeare highlights how attractive the idea of power is. The phrase suggests that becoming king is something valuable and desirable, which helps explain why the characters are tempted by ambition.

Throughout the rest of *Macbeth*, Shakespeare presents ambition as something that gradually corrupts Macbeth and transforms him into a tyrannical ruler. After becoming king, Macbeth's ambition does not disappear; instead, it intensifies and makes him increasingly paranoid. For example, he arranges the murder of Banquo because he fears Banquo's descendants will take the throne. This demonstrates how ambition becomes obsessive and destructive, pushing Macbeth to commit further violence in order to maintain his power. Shakespeare suggests that once ambition leads to immoral actions, it can spiral out of control and ultimately lead to chaos and downfall.

Ultimately, Shakespeare presents ambition as a deeply destructive force that corrupts both the individual and the natural order. While ambition may initially appear to offer power and success, it ultimately leads to moral decay, chaos and inevitable downfall. Through characters like Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, Shakespeare warns a Jacobean audience that unchecked ambition, especially when it defies the Great Chain of Being, brings disorder to both society and the self. Therefore, the play suggests that true stability comes from loyalty, morality and acceptance of one's rightful place, reinforcing the dangers of allowing ambition to override conscience.